

# DUENDE



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APRIL

# Shadow

A DETECTIVE MAGAZINE

MURDER IN THE NEXT ROOM



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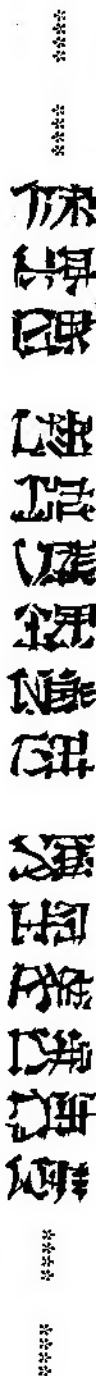
## about our cover...

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Now we *could* just come right out and tell you which title, but this is *Duende* and we prefer the oblique to the obvious, and so we've borrowed a leaf from Walter B. Gibson's notebook (See *The Chinese Disks*, *Shadow* 11/1/34) and "translated" this title into a very peculiar "Chinese." (See right) To decipher this Chinese, simply align the edge of a sheet of paper with the vertical guidelines provided, so that the right half of the strip is covered, and read the result.

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As for Rick's cover illustration, itself, that, too, is an illusion. As the original novel in question never really had a cover to call its own, (One was pulled out of the files, but you've all heard that story) we've created one of our own. Taking the original cover to *The Crystal Buddha*, (*Shadow* 1/1/38) Rick has superimposed upon it elements from the dust jackets of two books authored by a pair of writers who had some influence on both Walter Gibson's writing, and on *The Shadow*. You'll find *The Crystal Buddha* cover on our contents page, but the other two you'll just have to find for yourself. Both are reproduced in this issue's interview, "Out of the Shadows--Walter Gibson."



OUR back covers (both of 'em) are the work of a newcomer to *Duende's* pages, though we're sure that there are few out there who are not familiar with the finely-stippled artwork of Frank Hamilton. Frank's work has appeared in numerous books and journals devoted to the old pulps and without doubt, he is the Toast of Pulpdom. And rightly so. Frank, a *Shadow* enthusiast, is a native of Gloucester, Massachusetts, and he contributes consistently to the excellent *Xenophile* these days. He joins *Duende* with this issue and we're damn proud to have him as a contributor.

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While the Lester Dent back cover is self-explanatory, the other is not. Our inside back cover was commissioned by Walter Gibson himself, as a tribute to his recently-departed cat, Baby. Baby, it seems, bore a strong resemblance to the cat depicted on the cover of the final issue of *The Shadow*. For more background on this, see *Xenophile* #17 where this illustration first appeared as the front cover. *Xenophile*, by the way, is a wonderful monthly journal which contains articles and buy/sell/trade ads on the fantasy/pulp/mystery field. Inquire Nils Hardin, editor, P.O. Box 9660, St. Louis, Mo. 63122.



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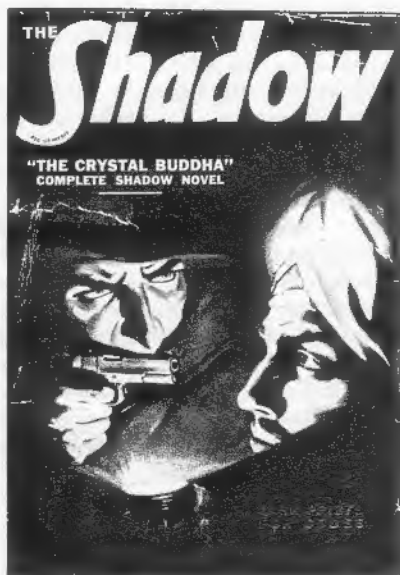
WINTER 1976-77 ISSUE

# DUENDE

WILL MURRAY, EDITOR

• A JOURNAL AND ARCHIVE FOR PULP LORE •

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: THERE ARE FAR, FAR TOO MANY PEOPLE WHO HAVE AIDED AND CONTRIBUTED TO THE PROCESS OF PUTTING TOGETHER THIS ISSUE OF DUENDE TO FIT IN THIS SPACE. THEY KNOW WHO THEY ARE, AND DUENDE IS GRATEFUL. OF THIS GROUP, FIVE INDIVIDUALS DESERVE ESPECIAL MENTION, AND SO THIS ISSUE OF DUENDE IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED TO MR. WALTER B. GIBSON, MR. RYERSON JOHNSON, MR. JOHN NANOVIC, MR. PAUL BONNER, JR., AND MR. WILLIAM H. DESMOND.

A QUOTE OF NOTE: "WHO KNOWS BUT SOME FUTURE HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN MAY FIND IN THE PULP MAGAZINE THE FOLKLORE OF TODAY, WHILE HE SPURNS JAMES BRANCH CABELL AS ARTIFICIAL!"

--- ARON M. MATHIEU, EDITOR  
WRITER'S DIGEST, OCTOBER, 1980

DUENDE. (IN ENGLISH, GOBLIN.) PUBLISHED UNDER THE AEGIS OF ODYSSEY PUBLICATIONS, AND DEVOTED TO THE RESEARCH AND PRESERVATION OF THOSE CURIOUS MAGAZINES, THE PULPS. NO SUBSCRIPTIONS. SINGLE COPIES, \$2.00. FIRST ISSUE AVAILABLE FROM VISION BOOKS, 18 HEYWOOD AVE., MELROSE, MA. 02172 ONLY AT \$1.50 PER COPY. CONTENTS COPYRIGHT 1977 BY WILL MURRAY. ADDRESS ALL CORRESPONDENCE, CONTRIBUTIONS, AND INQUIRIES TO DUENDE % WILL MURRAY, 334 E. SQUANTUM ST., NORTH QUINCY, MA. 02171 (TEL. 1-617-328-9460).

# EDITORIAL

## GHOST-BREAKING AMONG THE PULPS AND OTHER MATTERS...

**I**T'S been a long time between *Duende* #1 and this second issue. The main reason for the delay lies in our lead article, which we believe may be the single most important piece of research and writing on *Doc Savage*. After forty years, the story of "The Secret Kenneth Robesons" can now be told--and by way of explanation the story behind "The Secret Kenneth Robesons" deserves brief mention.

Almost three years ago, in March, 1973, we first began to poke around in the matter of the ghost writers in *Doc Savage*. Our original intent was simple: to identify the works of the one or two ghosts thought to have been involved, and to identify the writers by name, if possible. The motivation was simply to weed out the non-Dent novels, and a short article with a new index to the novels was the ultimate goal.

Somehow, we succeeded in our initial goals, but the project expanded far beyond that. New ghost writers came to light, new information which resulted in our incredible expanded *Duende* *Doc Savage* Index--even while the first issue of *Duende* was being created and published, this project, in secret, went on. In time, our interest grew beyond the identities of the mysterious other Kenneth Robesons, into their lives and histories, until we became involved in tracking these ghost writers down. And with the data turning up in that direction, coupled with the framework of our master index, we found ourselves writing an *history* of *Doc Savage Magazine*, built around the personalities of those involved and relating that to the other Street & Smith magazines. A formidable task.

For two solid years, the research dragged on. Then, another full year spent in writing "The Secret Kenneth Robesons." As the research never stopped, numerous revisions were made on what totaled four separate drafts of the article. Even as we prepared to go to press, new bits of data were being pasted onto the lay-out sheets, which goes to show you how thorough and painstaking is the work that goes into *Duende*.

The culmination of all of this research--and the one incident that made it all worthwhile--occured in November, 1976, when Ryerson Johnson and his wife Lois, paid me a visit at my home. But, of course, the visit meant new information--and the inevitable revisions!

But all of that is past, now. "The Secret Kenneth Robesons" is finished, and *Duende* #2,

long awaited, is here, and awaits your pleasure. Read it once, then spend some time pouring over our compelling *Doc Savage* Index, the re-read it again--it should take at least two readings to digest it all!

**A**S a matter of interest, I'm told that this business of determining authorship through textual analysis is an actual literary science, called Attribution. We weren't aware of that fact, but for our money, it might better be called ghost breaking--a term we find more comfortable as it's closer to our pulp roots.

As for the future, we have no definite plans for *Duende* #3. Partially due to the effort expended in producing this issue, and partially due to the lack of suitable articles for publication. Good, well-researched, factual articles are needed. But query first--*Duende* has high standards. Issue #3 may feature a number of shorter articles on the lesser-known pulp characters, and we have many interviews on hand, much like that of our Walter Gibson interview in this issue. In fact, we have several more hours of tape featuring Mr. Gibson, and an all-interview Walter Gibson issue is being contemplated.

Our contest (see last issue) was an abysmal failure. Virtually no one submitted any new data, although on our own, we have expanded our Lester Dent bibliography, so all is not lost. However, we will keep the contest open for a while, yet. Data on pulp stories by Lester Dent are what is needed; if you can help, please do.

Finally, we are pleased to announce that *Duende* is now an official publication of Odyssey Publications, and that Odyssey and *Duende* will be working together in the future to reprint the best of the pulps, and to preserve their history, as well.

For those who don't know, Odyssey Publications produces quality paperbound facsimile editions of rare pulps magazines, as well as facsimile anthologies culled from the pulps. Titles such as *Strange Tales*, *Golden Fleece*, *Oriental Stories*, *Ka-ar*--even *Spicy Mystery* have been reprinted. The interested may inquire: Odyssey Publications, P.O. Box 71, Melrose Highlands, Ma. 02177.

--Will Murray  
(1/11/77)





by WILL MURRAY

*Preface:*

KENNETH ROBESON never existed. Kenneth Robeson was an example of a phenomenon indigenous to the pulp magazine, the "house name." A house name was a kind of literary mask designed to obscure authorship and, unlike a pen name which is the sole property of a single author, the house name is owned by the publishing company and often conceals several authors under one umbrella signature.

The house name came into wide use--though it was hardly new--during the Thirties when the character magazines came into being. Most of these, *The Shadow*, *Doc Savage*, *The Spider*, and others, were published with a house name attached to the lead novel. This practice was designed to create the illusion of uniformity of authorship and reader identification when a series was being penned by a variety of men and also served as a safeguard against an author quitting or becoming deceased, so that a successful series might continue under a new author without its readers batting an eye.

The house name also had a cosmetic purpose. Each was selected to conjure up the proper image, in the readers' eyes, of the "author" chronicling the adventures of the hero. Thus, the exploits of The Shadow were recounted by the dignified "Maxwell Grant;" the missions of the rapier-wielding Operator 5 were penned by "Curtis Steele;" and the sand-and-whipcord "Kenneth Robeson" became the author of *Doc Savage Magazine*.

**I**N the beginning, the name was Kenneth Roberts, and under that pseudonym the first Doc Savage novel, *The Man of Bronze*, (#1 3/33--leading number refers to novel's position as written, while second numbers refer to date of publication. Consult the *Duende* Doc Savage Index on pages 28-31.) appeared. When it was discovered that Kenneth Roberts was the name of a real historical writer, the name became

the familiar Kenneth Robeson with *The Land of Terror* (#2 4/33).

The name was concocted by Street & Smith Publications for exclusive use on the Doc Savage series in order to conceal the rather undramatic name of Lester Dent. It was later to hide Dent's name on the Ed Stone stories he would write for *Crime Busters*, and also mask two other writers on The Avenger series.

Although Lester Dent would write millions of words under that name and come to dislike the anonymity it created, his was not the only hand involved. The series was created by Street & Smith vice-president Henry W. Ralston and was guided largely by him and editor John Nanovic. As is well known, these men had occasion to draft apprentice Kenneth Robesons to work on *Doc Savage* for various and recondite reasons. Their names appear on the Street & Smith records and, except for a single case of confused identity, they are known.

THE present accepted author attributions of the Doc Savage novels credit Lester Dent with 165 novels; Norman Daniels (a.k.a. Norman Danberg) with nine; Alan Hathway with four; and William G. Bogart with but three novels.

But there were ghost writers whom Lester Dent employed to help him write *Doc Savage* apart from those hired by Street & Smith. Friends of his, for the most part. Men who are forgotten today, or else little known in their own day. No known file or record reflects their work; nor have they even been whispered about. In most cases, these men are no longer living, their lips forever sealed. But they have left their quiet marks in the novels that they wrote almost forty years ago and, whether unknown or forgotten, they have been rediscovered.

They are the Secret Kenneth Robesons.

\*\*\*\*\*

One: *The First Ghost.*

**B**Y the Fall of 1934, Lester Dent felt that he had had his fill of *Doc Savage Magazine*. After only five years of pulp writing, he had written unnumbered short stories, twenty-four *Doc Savage* novels and at least thirteen *Doc Savage* radio scripts. A success in his field, he now felt that he should be moving on to "a better class of writing"--the slick magazines, such as *Collier's* and *The Saturday Evening Post*. His first stirrings toward what he considered good writing happened to coincide with his purchase of the *Albatross*, the forty-foot, Cheasapeake Bay bugeye he called his "treasure hunt schooner."

Lester Dent had perhaps two great dreams which he pursued for many years: he lusted to ply the high seas and dredge up that great lure of mariners, sunken treasure, and he ached to establish himself as a nationally recognized writer under his own name. He never quite realized those dreams; yet he never gave up on them, either. But in 1934, they were cherished hopes, yet unrealized.

Thus, in preparation for an extended cruise from New York to the Caribbean, and with his interest in *Doc Savage* at low ebb, Lester Dent cast about for the first of several ghost writers whom he would employ over the next six years.

**A**S Ron Goulart--the "Kenneth Robeson" of the modern *Avenger* novels, strangely enough--first revealed in his *Cheap Thrills; an Informal History of the Pulp Magazine*, Dent chose a friend and fellow pulp writer, W. Ryerson Johnson, as his first auxiliary Kenneth Robeson. At that time, Johnson owned up to ghosting three Docs, but could only recall two titles. Since then, the identity of his third novel has been a tantalizing mystery that has baffled the best pulp scholars around.

Fortunately, Walter Ryerson Johnson--his friends call him "Johnny"--is still with us. I contacted him in May, 1976 and found him to be a warm and generous correspondent. Currently, he writes children's books, texts, histories

and considers himself one of the few "hack freelancers left on the scene." But back during the pulp era, he wrote for only the best of them: *Adventure*, *Argosy* and *Western Story*. For the most part, he wrote westerns, because he soon learned that to survive as a pulp writer, he had to specialize and he found that he had a knack for westerns. When the western pulps slumped, he switched to detective stories and learned to write them as an editor for *Popular's Detective Tales*, *Dime Mystery* and *The Spider* in 1943. In his time, he ghosted several Mike Shayne stories and wrote a *Phantom Detective* novel, *The Silent Death* (12/36).



LESTER DENT, SAILOR

**R**YERSON JOHNSON first met Lester Dent at one of Arthur Burks' Fiction Guild meetings, where only the most successful pulp writers convened. They soon became close friends and Johnson remembers Dent quite vividly:

"When you're talking about Les Dent you're talking about one of my favorite people on this earth. A completely genuine, honest person; not a phoney pore in his body--and it was a big body, big and gangling and awkward. ...Once he was visiting me at an old house I still have on the coast of Maine. I was trying to level out the yard a little. Had a big hole dug around an enormous boulder. Three or four of us were try-

ing to extricate the boulder with ropes and pry bars. Les moved in and got his arms around it and heaved it out by himself. *Doc Savage*. I sometimes halfway thought of him in those terms."

**E**ARLY on in their long friendship, Dent offered to let Johnson ghost a few *Doc* novels. "Just blast it out," Dent told him. "Just get the action flow and the plot down...I'll do the prettying afterwards." Johnson wrote three novels over more than a years' time. They were:

<i>Land of Always-Night</i>	(#25 March, 1935)
<i>The Fantastic Island</i>	(#35 Dec. 1935)

*The Motion Menace* (#55 May, 1938)

Dent seemed to have had some problems "prettying" the Johnson novels. A comparison of the three show marked differences. *Land of Always-Night* was heavily revised and is more Lester Dent than Ryerson Johnson; *The Fantastic Island*, on the other hand, is largely Johnson with a little revision. *The Motion Menace* is a completely different story:

"On the *Motion Menace*--it was my original idea, and I gave it a soft sell in the opening, starting with a house fly buzzing across Doc Savage's desk, and stopping in midair and dropping straight down in front of Doc's face. Doc wonders idly. Next sequence has a seagull seen by Doc from his moving car; seagull (hitting the invisible motion barrier) drops straight down. Doc's car is the next thing to contact the invisible force...and then a bunch of airplanes--or I guess the planes came first, and Doc didn't run into it with the car until later in the story... Les was more than a little scornful about starting out a Doc Savage novel with just a single fly, and he ended up restructuring the whole story. 'Who do (you) think we're writing for, Harper's? You wanta know my audience?' Then he told me about a 'scroungy looking, pimpleface little kid about ten years old' he had seen on the subway reading a Doc Savage Magazine. 'Write for him,' Les said."

As it turned out, Lester Dent didn't just restructure *The Motion Menace*, he scrapped Johnson's version entirely, though he kept the central idea and title, and wrote it anew. The published novel is thus wholly in Dent's style with no traces of Johnson evident. It begins, not with Doc Savage in New York, but with Pat Savage in Shanghai, China! Interestingly enough, though the manuscript was submitted to Street & Smith in 1936, it did not see print until 1938.

THE problem Dent experienced with the Johnson novels boiled down to the marked dissimilarity between their writing styles. Ryerson Johnson, a meticulous writer, wrote in a rich, dense style that dwelt upon detail; while Dent affected a terse, brisk prose in which, once a detail was laid down, it was promptly forgotten in the torrent of action. Johnson recalls that Dent thought he put too much color and background in *Land of Always-Night*, but "He didn't change the basics of that one so much. Just fitted it to his pace and writing style...Les told me, 'With Doc it isn't

enough to have excitement; you have to have action. Move it along. Using the same wordage, make it three fights instead of two.' ...But I had learned enough on that one, so that when I tackled *Fantastic Island* I was able to get it more into his style, and he didn't change it so much."

But even when he revised the above novels, Dent had problems. Although Johnson used a reference file for background when writing his Doc entries, he made a few technical mistakes--mistakes which Dent tried to correct. Most of these were minor, such as Johnson's habit of describing Doc's eyes as gold-flecked instead of the traditional flake-gold, and placing Johnny Littlejohn's monocle in his eye rather than on his lapel. But one error was not, and it seemed to give Dent some trouble over the next few years.

WHEN Lester Dent first introduced Doc's cousin, Pat Savage, in *Brand of the Werewolf* (#11 1/34), he gave her a single Savage family trait, bronze hair. He made no mention of her eye and skin color. Then, in Chapter 1 of *The Fantastic Island*, her eyes are described as golden for the first time. However, in Chapter 2, they are suddenly blue. The next ghost writer to come along also described them as golden and, as time wore on, even Lester Dent himself seems uncertain. In some novels, they are gold, in others they are flake-gold, and in yet other yarns he states that they are not flake-gold. Dent never offers an alternate color, though. I asked Ryerson Johnson about this and he replied: "You say that until my *Fantastic Island*, he never indicated eye color? Runs in my mind he said her eyes were blue. If I had them golden, I must have forgotten to make them blue in that instance and was influenced by Doc's golden eyes to make it a family trait."

If Johnson's memory is accurate, then Dent, after fighting it awhile, went along with Pat's



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golden eyes as they had been established in several novels before he could correct the situation. Later, in *The Yellow Cloud*, Dent added bronze skin to Pat's list of traits to complete her resemblance to Doc.

As this incident shows, Dent was not capable of thoroughly correcting Johnson's prose (neither were the proof readers, it seems) and little things slipped past him. This would seem a minor business but, by a weird coincidence, the next two ghost writers on Doc Savage would both happen to read Johnson's first two novels and they picked up and proliferated these technical deviations, commencing a chain-reaction which wouldn't cease until Dent resumed writing Doc Savage exclusively.

**L**ESTER DENT'S Doc Savage contract called upon him to produce acceptable Doc Savage manuscripts on a regular basis and he had the option to farm them out to ghost writers, if he so chose. At the time he hired Johnson, he was being paid \$700 per novel and he turned \$500 of that over to Johnson. The usual procedure called for Dent to submit plot outlines to editor John Nanovic for an okay. Then he would write each story. Though he wouldn't do this with all of his ghosts, Lester Dent had enough confidence in Ryerson Johnson to allow him to plot his own novels. Johnson recalls:

"John Nanovic was editor for Doc...He rode herd pretty closely. He was a little dubious about me ghosting for Les until Les assured him he'd bring it all into his acceptable style in a rewrite if necessary. And he sold Nanovic on the idea of getting some fresh plot tricks. There had to be three good escape tricks (as well as a bunch of little ones) in every story. I remember when I submitted the plotline for *Fantastic Island*, in a couple of places I simply said, Doc escapes by some clever trick. Only I used Les' term SCT. Nanovic found the plot acceptable, but grumbled, 'It better be clever.' On that monster iguana sequence I nearly out-tricked myself. I had the prisoner--I think it was Doc's sister, Pat, view the iguana through a window glass that, unknown to her, was a magnifying glass. She, and the reader, saw this monster creature that stood salivating and red eyed between her and safety. But iguanas don't grow that big, of course, and the time came when I had to account to the reader for this fact. I came up with a solution then that I have used repeatedly since in other story situations. Instead of one monster, I filled the courtyard with little yard

long monsters. As I recall, Doc carried Pat, leaping from one hungry monster to another, hop-skipping on their backs across the courtyard--like Lisa crossing the river on a succession of ice cubes.

"What sprang the idea for (*The Fantastic Island*) was a newspaper piece about a mad baroness currently involved with a murder under mysterious circumstances in the Galapagos. Starting from that I started reading up on the islands. Dropped the baron(ess) theme, but went ahead when I realized how much good "color" there was available re: this location. Worked up a storyline. Dent and I yacked it around, refined it, and I started writing. I never was a fast writer. Took me three weeks to do that, which was a record for me at that time. Dent thought I ought to do it in a week or so. I remember a wire I had from him: 'Where the--Western Union says say heck--is the copy?'"

**R**YERSON JOHNSON wrote his first Doc Savage novel, *Land of Always-Night*, around September-October, 1934. He still remembers being picked up, manuscript and all, in Dent's La Salle convertible and being driven home to Illinois. Dent went from there to La Plata, Mo.--the first such extended return since his coming to New York to work for Dell in 1931--where he revised the novel. It was mailed to Street & Smith by his father, Bern Dent, the first Doc novel to emanate from La Plata.

Lester Dent and his wife, Norma, went on the first of their treasure hunting jaunts to the Caribbean early in 1935 and they remained in the islands until May. There, Dent did his first serious treasure hunting, became an expert deep-sea fisherman and swimmer--all the while continuing to write Doc Savage. Mrs. Dent recalls her role in that adventure: "My job was to look for sharks. I couldn't climb the mast so they had to



copyright 1935 Street & Smith

strap me to it."

As for treasure finding, Ryerson Johnson remembers this: "He stocked up on every electronic sounding device he could find. They were all too sensitive. Only thing he ever brought up, he said, were wet coconuts."

When Dent returned to New York, Ryerson Johnson was promptly asked to ghost *The Fantastic Island*, despite the fact that Street & Smith had by that time already brought their own ghost writer into the series. By Summer, Dent re-established a home in La Plata, where he would spend part of each year. His time, until 1940, would then be divided between New York, La Plata and the *Albatross*.

The date of the writing of Johnson's version of *The Motion Menace* is unknown. According to the author, "He (Dent) was hemming and hawing over my version, and we discussed things about it now and then. He had a kind of hang-up on it I thought." In fact, Dent nearly junked the novel; He put it aside, wrote a fresh Doc story, and then came back to rewrite the story.

**I**N the final analysis, Ryerson Johnson was a most important Doc Savage author. Though his published novels were actually in the way of collaborations, they had a marked influence on the Kenneth Robeson to follow. *Land of Always-Night* is considered one of the finest lost race novels ever published in *Doc Savage* and it served as the spring-board for two other Doc yarns; *The Fantastic Island* has often been cited as the obvious source of Ian Fleming's *Doctor No*; and though his draft of *The Motion Menace* was never published, Lester Dent liked the "invisible motion barrier" idea enough to use it again in *The Spook of Grandpa Eban* (#130 12/43).

Lester Dent had originally chosen Ryerson Johnson as his writing partner after they had discussed writing technique, and Dent had found that they both used a similar analyzing and organizing approach to writing. Even after the *Motion Menace* problem, Dent seemed to be satisfied with the partnership, as he asked Johnson to write a fourth Doc. Johnson declined because: "Ghosting is a dead alley for a writer. It's hunger writing. I never did any more of it than I had to when I needed quick money."

Though Ryerson Johnson's involvement with *Doc Savage* (though not with Lester Dent) ended in 1936, his story has a sequel of a sort: when Bantam was preparing to reprint the novels in 1964, Johnson, thinking that they were intending to update them, tried to get the assignment. When told by Bantam that the stories were to be reprinted unchanged, he was astounded as he was convinced that their "crude pulpiness" would never succeed in today's market.

## Two: The Lost Kenneth Robeson.

**A**T about the same time that Lester Dent was fishing coconuts out of the Caribbean, perhaps unknown to him, a new Kenneth Robeson was being apprenticed on *Doc Savage*. The reason for this is open to conjecture and the author's very name has become lost to public knowledge. About him, *Shadow* author Walter Gibson relates the following anecdote:

"We'd have some great meetings whenever they'd (meaning the Street & Smith writers) come in to New York. We'd all meet down at Street & Smith's. One time we all went on a tour of Sing Sing and Larry Donovan was along with me that day. We got delayed and finally had to get Larry out of the place. John Nanovic was counting noses and thought maybe he got locked in a cell! But we got him out all right."

Now it may be that this is just an isolated instance, or it may be that Laurence Donovan was just one of those unlucky souls who are forever getting lost or forgotten in life. Which ever the case, this man has become "misplaced" as a Doc Savage author and his work credited to another. It came about in this way:

**I**N the second issue of Fred Cook's *Bronze Shadows* (12/65), there appeared for the first time in print, the basic author breakdown on Doc Savage. Insofar as what was catalogued in the Street & Smith files (from which this information was extracted) it was accurate. (The novels that Dent sub-contracted appeared under his own name in those files.) This listing, upon which all the Doc Savage indexes of the past ten years have been based, credited Laurence Donovan with the following novels:

<i>Murder Melody</i>	(#34 11/35)
<i>Murder Mirage</i>	(#38 1/36)
<i>The Men Who Smiled No More</i>	(#41 4/36)
<i>Haunted Ocean</i>	(#43 6/36)
<i>The Black Spot</i>	(#40 7/36)
<i>Cold Death</i>	(#31 9/36)
<i>Land of Long Juju</i>	(#45 1/37)
<i>Mad Eyes</i>	(#47 5/37)
<i>He Could Stop the World</i>	(#48 7/37)

If only it had been left that way...

For, in the next issue of *Bronze Shadows* (2/66), editor Cook ran an update stating that "It seems that the 'Laurence Donovan' who wrote those nine Doc Savage stories is in reality Norman A. Danberg."

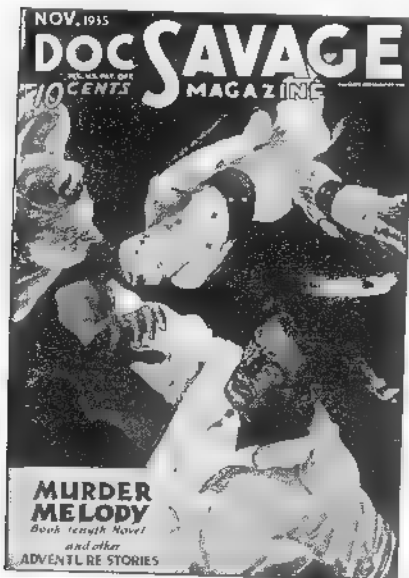
The cause of this misconception can be traced back to a couple of typographical errors whereby a Norman Daniels story or two was pub-

lished under the Donovan byline. One of these was "Cops Die Hard" (*Crime Busters*, 2/38), a story that was transferred from *The Whisperer*. In the transference, Donovan's name somehow became attached to the story. Evidently, whomever was going through the S&S files in 1966 happened onto one of these mixups and took it a face value, which suggested that Laurence Donovan was a pen name for Norman Daniels.

Although this mistake was an honest one, it had far-reaching effects. The credit for those nine novels was modified to read: "Norman Danberg, writing under the name Laurence Donovan" and through the various reprintings of that listing, from *The Hero Pulp Index* to *Doc Savage, His Apocalyptic Life*, Donovan's name was eventually discarded as unnecessary decoration, and the credit simply read: "Norman Danberg"(or Daniels). Thus, poor Laurence Donovan, several years after his death, was reduced to a pen name and the credit for his Doc Savage novels--not to mention *everything* he ever wrote in his life--was transferred to another.

He became the Lost Kenneth Robeson.

**A**N so it stood for ten years. No one seemed to challenge the illogic of why Norman Daniels would write those novels under a pen name when they were going to be published under the Robeson name, anyway. Nor did anyone notice that both Norman Daniels and Laurence Donovan were listed in *The Hero Pulp Index* as having written separate Dan Fowler novels in *G-Men*. And, most telling of all, there was Walter Gibson's own statement in *Pulp* #7 that he knew a "Larry Donovan" quite well.



This present writer, though unaware of the *Bronze Shadows* statement at the time, did notice them, and I put the question to three men who might know best.

Walter Gibson, John Nanovic and Standard Magazines editor Mort Weisinger all said the same thing, but it was Weisinger put it most forcefully:

"I knew Larry Donovan and Norman Daniels quite well; they both wrote for me. They were two different men. Daniels' real name was Danenberg. He was a prolific hack, occasionally turning out a good yarn, but most of his product was run-of-the-mill. Daniels wrote many Phantom Detective, Black Bats and Lone Eagles for me. Donovan, never. Donovan was a more creative writer, a good craftsman."

That established, a check into the Street & Smith files yielded Donovan's name as the author of those nine stories--a distinct shock, as I was only trying to prove that he existed and hadn't suspected that Daniels might *not* be the true author there.

**T**HE entanglements of the past aside, Laurence Donovan is clearly the author of the Doc Savage novels hitherto associated with Norman Daniels. But not much is known about this man. He began writing for Street & Smith in 1929, contributing to pulps as diverse as *Sport Story* and *The Feds*. He also wrote for the racy *Spicy Detective Stories* and some of the spice dripped into two of his major pulp series. For not only did he write *Doc Savage*, but also *The Skipper* and *The Whisperer*!

John Nanovic recalls Laurence Donovan:

"Larry Donovan was a writer that I picked up; I don't know where he came from, now. I don't remember. But he did some short stories and he did *The Skipper*. He'd go to the drugstore and have a raw hamburger, you know, for a sandwich! And they would look at him and so forth. He was quite a character, but he could write quite well."

Laurence Donovan was the first new Kenneth Robeson to be hired by Street & Smith and the reasons for this are unclear. As Lester Dent seems to have been making no secret of his boredom with Doc Savage and had already begun to farm out novels to Ryerson Johnson, Donovan may have been brought in as a precautionary measure.

Laurence Donovan's apprenticeship on *Doc Savage* strongly resembles Ted Tinsley's drafting into *The Shadow* a year later in 1936, and a partial answer may be found in a comparison of their work. According to Walter Gibson, Ted Tinsley was brought into that series in an effort to experiment with new approaches to the novels. Tinsley's Shadow stories differ from Gibson's in perhaps three important ways: they are more modern; they are more violent; and female villains (as well as some mild sex) are introduced into the series.



By comparison, Laurence Donovan's Doc Savage stories differ from those of Lester Dent in that they are more modern and daring in their science fiction content; they are more violent; and female antagonists appear for the first time, as well.

If Laurence Donovan's purpose was to seed the Doc Savage series with fresh types of stories, there are still the unresolved questions: Why did he produce his entries on such a rushed schedule--one per month--and was Lester Dent aware of his involvement from the outset? Was Laurence Donovan being trained as the permanent Kenneth Robeson in the event of Lester Dent's apparently-imminent resignation?

While none of these questions may ever be satisfactorily resolved, it should be pointed out that Tinsely was brought into *The Shadow* without Walter Gibson's prior knowledge and, as Dent was in the Caribbean when Donovan got involved, he may not have known either. But if Lester Dent had planned to abandon Doc Savage, he obviously changed his mind upon his return to New York, as he was given a new contract in July, 1935, which raised his rate from \$700 to \$750 per novel.

**L**AURENCE DONOVAN was a free lance writer who contributed regularly to many Street & Smith magazines. So for whatever reasons, when the decision was made to bring in an apprentice Kenneth Robeson, Donovan, versatile and at hand, was a likely choice. He wrote his first Doc Savage novel, *Cold Death*, over most of April, 1935, being paid in installments as he brought in each week's output for guidance. He then went ahead and wrote a novel a month for the next eight months.

Though he never knew it, Donovan's Doc Savage novels were influenced by and owed much to those of Ryerson Johnson. Johnson's *Land of Always-Night*, which concerned an underground city lit by a strange "cold light," had just been published to rave reader reaction when Donovan entered the picture. Donovan, probably prompted by editorial suggestion, broke *Land of Always-Night* down and reconstituted it as his first two entries. While *Cold Death* merely borrows the cold light idea and modifies it into a death ray, *Murder Melody* is a "Buck Rogersish" extension of the subterranean world--called Subterranae--replete with the kind of scientific gadgetry more at home in *Amazing Stories* than in *Doc Savage*. This city is illuminated, not by cold light, but by twin solar columns--an image which will later occur in *Doc Savage*. Inexplicably, a female character in *Murder Melody* shares the same name--Lanta--with a girl who appeared in Dent's *The Other World* (#84 1/40)--another underground world story.

Donovan's succeeding novels are more his own, however, and they are well-constructed and well-written. Dent had no hand in these as far as is known as Donovan made a conscious effort to duplicate Dent's style.

Despite that, the Donovan Docs carry their own stamp. They are more complex in terms of plot and gadgetry. The science fiction in them is less extrapolation than conception. Whereas Lester Dent managed to sustain a novel on one or two feasible inventions, Donovan packed his stories with as many wild gimmicks as he could fabricate. Consequently, they lose their impact.

**B**UT what Laurence Donovan lost in impact, he made up for in ingenuity. His yarns abound with such terrifying death devices and eerie phenomena as: glowing globes that evaporate humans; a solar-powered submarine gliding through a world bereft of electricity; mind control; human giants; and super cities deep within the earth and cupped in high mountains.

Of course, Donovan didn't portray Doc Savage and his men with the skill of Lester Dent. But the variances are minor: Doc's eyes are "flaky gold" and Monk shouts "Howlin' Calamities!" much too often. He was the second writer to bequeath golden eyes to Pat Savage. This was in *Murder Mirage* and *The Black Spot*, both of which were written before *The Fantastic Island* was published, interestingly enough. In his later *The Men Who Smiled No More* and *He Could Stop the World*, he mysteriously omits her eye color.

Editorial policy seems to have excluded Donovan from current events, however, and he became embroiled in a tricky continuity problem as a result. When Dent introduced Ham's Pet ape, Chemistry, in *Dust of Death* (#36 10/35), John Nanovic rushed the novel into print to test reaction to the character. At that time, a number of pre-Chemistry Dent tales were still in stock and Donovan, unaware of the new addition, left him out of his next stories, just as

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Lester Dent began using him in *his* next tales. As it stood, the novels might have been released at random with Chemistry flickering in and out of the series, but the canny John Nanovic got around this problem with some juggling.

He cleared the shelves of most of the pre-Chemistry tales and ran *The Metal Master* (#42 3/36, with a paragraph of his own in Chapter 15 explaining that the ape had been in quarantine, thus his absence. Though this was Chemistry's second published appearance, it was his *fourth* in the written sequence, as he had appeared in *The Seven Agate Devils* (#37 5/36) and *The Mid-as Man* (#40 8/36). Donovan only became aware of Chemistry upon reading *last of series*, and he included him in *Land of Long Juju* onward.

**W**HEN Laurence Donovan closed out his *Doc Savage* work, he did so with a bang. He took his twin-towered super city from *Murder Melody*, added elements from *The Monsters* (#14 4/34) and *Red Snow* (#24 2/35), and gave the concoction a title designed to out-do *The Man Who Shook the Earth* (#12 2/34). The result was *He Could Stop the World*, a corker of a tale--if one overburdened with invention.

It just happened that *The Fantastic Island* was published about that time and Donovan read it. (At the same time, as we'll see, so did his successor.) You can find Johnson's iguana-magnifying trick in Chapter 9 of *He Could Stop the World*. Donovan reverses the gimmick so that the "giant" seems to be Pat Savage!

That was in December, 1935. Without breaking stride, Donovan plunged immediately into writing *The Skipper* and *The Whisperer*. He must have worked like a demon for, between April, 1935 and July, 1937, Laurence Donovan produced a total of 38 Doc, Skipper and Whisperer novels, as well as a number of shorts for *The Feds*, *Movie Action* (he wrote the whole first issue) and others. He also moved about quite a bit, having moved from Flushing to Long Island on his Doc Savage earnings, and he spent stretches of time Connecticut and Florida. But beyond revising his *Cold Death* in March, 1936, he association with *Doc Savage* was at an end.

Unfortunately, both *The Skipper* and *The Whisperer* endured but a year. Donovan continued the Skipper shorts in *Doc Savage*, (no doubt because Donovan himself was a sailor) but he abandoned the Whisperer shorts in favor of taking over the Pete Rice stories then running in *Wild West Weekly*. Not entirely forgetful of Doc Savage, one of these last, "Murder in Spook Hole" echoes an earlier Doc title, *Spook Hole* (#28 8/35). By 1939, he has ceased all of his series work and seems to have drifted away from Street & Smith entirely. Walter Gibson recalls that Donovan, though a likable guy, was a heavy

drinker who used to become undependable when he went off on a bender. On one occasion, Donovan phoned John Nanovic and threatened to jump from his hotel window. When Nanovic told him to go right ahead, Donovan calmed down. This kind of erratic behavior may have been behind his departure from the company.

During the Forties, Donovan appears most often in the Standard Group magazines and in *Speed Detective*, the retitled *Spicy Detective*. His only known work of note during this time were a pair of Dan Fowler novels, *Murder on Ice* (11/42) and *Death Stops the Coal* (Winter, 1944) for *G-Men*. He appears to have been on the wane as a pulp writer. Mort Weisinger's comments to the contrary, he may have written some Black Bat or Phantom novels after Weisinger left Standard to edit *Superman* in 1941.

As the Forties wear on, Laurence Donovan's name appears less and less often in the current pulp magazines and his work and life after that time are unknown. He is said to have died some twenty years ago.

Three: *The Unsubstantial Ghost*.

**A**LTHOUGH Laurence Donovan has supplanted Norman Daniels on those nine novels, the latter is not entirely out of the picture as yet. In *Cheap Thrills*, Daniels himself says: "I wrote *G-Men*, *The Phantom Detective*, *The Can-did Camera Kid*, *The Black Bat*, *Nick Carter*, *Doc Savage*...I've forgotten how many and their titles."

Daniels' *Doc Savage* work in an enigma. There is no direct evidence of his hand in any Doc Savage novel. However that does not entirely preclude his involvement there. As *The Motion Menace* proved, Lester Dent was capable of completely re-drafting a novel, retaining only the original author's ideas.

This may have been the case with *Devil on the Moon*



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(#58 3/38), which bears a striking resemblance to a 1969 Norman Daniels entry in the Avengers paperback series, titled *Moon Express*. Both novels concern a medallion-wearing criminal who dupes his victims into believing that they have been transported to the Moon. In *Devil on the Moon*, this is used for blackmail purposes, while *Moon Express* involves a trip to-the-moon swindle.

The strong similarities between these very unusual novels eliminates coincidence, so it may be that Norman Daniels wrote a draft of *Devil on the Moon* which Lester Dent rewrote so heavily that no trace of Daniels remains in the text. On the other hand, it could be that Daniels only purloined the earlier Dent plot. Only Daniels himself, who has thusfar defied tracing, can say for certain.

Without more concrete evidence, Norman Daniels cannot be listed as a Doc Savage author here, and the question of his work, if any, must remain unsolved indefinitely. But it should be pointed out that Mrs. Dent, who remembers the ghost writers, doesn't recall Norman Daniels and, further, there seems to be no evidence that Daniels wrote Nick Carter novels, either. It may be that his above statement refers only to the short stories that he did, indeed, write for both *Doc Savage* and *Nick Carter*, as well as for many other Street & Smith magazines, and those of other publishers.

#### Four: *The Forgotten Kenneth Robeson.*

**B**ETWEEN Lester Dent and Laurence Donovan, 23 Doc Savage novels were generated in 1935, enough of a backlog that the demand for new stories slackened dramatically over the next two years. Lester Dent made good use of this break. In 1936, he spent the first half of the year plumbing the waters off Cuba in an attempt to locate a sunken Spanish galleon reputed to hold a two-ton, solid gold table. Dent failed in this venture and nearly lost the *Albatross* to a violent hurricane. His

treasure hunting fever cooled after this.

He did continue to write Doc Savage during this time, but when he returned to New York in July, he turned to new areas of writing. Since *Doc Savage* began, Dent had always felt restricted by being so closely tied to one company and he took this opportunity to try new things.

By his own estimation, he wrote his two finest stories, "Sail" (11/36) and "Angelfish" (12/36) for *Black Mask* during this time. This was Dent's first successful venture into what he considered fine writing and it was guided by *Black Mask* editor, Joseph T. Shaw, in whom Dent found great inspiration and vision. Shortly thereafter,

Shaw's dismissal dealt Dent's new-found sense of literary worth as cruel a blow as that hurricane, (which partially inspired "Angelfish,") had to his treasure hunting hopes.

At about the same time, Dent wrote his first two novels for *Argosy*, *Hades* (12/5-12/19/36) and *Hocus Pocus* (5/22-6/5/37). These were undoubtedly for the prestige of having his name in *Argosy*, a top-rank pulp market. He still chafed behind the Kenneth Robeson name, now no longer his exclusive byline.

Dent spent the first three months of 1937 in New York. Upon finishing *The Feathered Octopus* in March, he took off for Europe.

The story is told that he was in Germany at the end of his trip when he took a fancy to travel home by dirigible. He promptly booked passage on the *Hindenburg*, but was turned away at the last moment for carrying

too much money on his person. Frantically, he bought up all the camera equipment he could find in an effort to absorb the offending funds. He was too late, however, as the *Hindenburg* had taken off by the time he'd returned to the field. Three days later, on May 6, 1937, the airship exploded as it approached its mooring mast at Lakehurst, New Jersey.

Doc Savage never flew a dirigible in any Lester Dent novel after that time.

Dent returned to La Plata for the rest of the year, where he wrote the first two Gadget Man stories for the new *Crime Busters* magazine, as well as more Doc Savage novels. He wrote



LESTER DENT AND MORT WEISINGER  
ABOARD THE BUGGYE, "ALBATROSS"



his last *Argosy* novel, *Genius Jones*, (11/21/37-1/1/38) in August and after that did very little pulp writing outside of *Doc Savage* and *Crime Busters*. He may have tried some slick writing about this time, but none of it ever sold. In examining his writing during these two slack years, another theory regarding Laurence Donovan suggests itself: the latter might have been hired at Dent's request as part of long-range plan to give Dent free time to try to crash the slicks.

**I**T took until 1937 for the last of the 1935 novels to be published and, as Lester Dent needed only to produce half as many novels in 1936-37 to keep *Doc Savage* going, one would think that he'd need no help with his output. But no sooner had Laurence Donovan written his last *Doc* novel, than Lester Dent began grooming a new ghost writer to take Ryerson Johnson's place.

This new ghost is one whose name has never been publicly linked to *Doc Savage*, nor does any known file or record reflect his work. He might be called the Forgotten Kenneth Robeson, yet he is clearly one of the most important of the *Doc Savage* writers for several reasons, and his rediscovery is of major significance.

**T**HAT rediscovery is something of a story in itself. It began in March, 1974, while I was researching a technical article, "The Bronze Genius," for *The Man Behind Doc Savage*. In the course of this research, I noticed certain technical errors--descriptions of characters and equipment--in some of the novels that suggested a definite pattern indicating a hitherto unknown Kenneth Robeson. By this time, the fact that Dent used ghosts had been publicized in *Cheap Thrills*. So, while writing "The Bronze Genius," I isolated, one by one, a block of about ten suspect novels.

I then spent a solid, frustrating year examining these for possible clues that might lead me to the author's identity. I found nothing within the stories themselves and might never have if I hadn't, at the same time, been prowling the short stories in *Doc Savage* for possible Lester Dent yarns under pen names.

I found a story titled "Grease--and Beauty," (10/37) which, ironically, I at first mistook for a Dent story because it involved a gimmick (the inoculation of whales to produce valuable ambergris) which Dent had used twice in the *Doc* novels, *Spook Hole* (#28 8/35) and *Colors for Murder* (#160 6/46). This story was one of a series which ran in the magazine from 1936 to 1939 and concerned a gum-chewing, proverb-spouting business scout named Duke Grant,

who is described thusly:

"He was scarcely five feet tall, but his shoulders were well over two feet across. From the shoulders down, he shrank; his hips were lean, his feet small, making him look something like an oversize wedge. On his head was a tall, towering hat--an old-fashioned type rarely seen. A beaver hat."

I read several Duke Grant stories and decided that the writing style was not Dent's. As the name attached to these tales was unfamiliar, I put the matter aside and went back to the problem of the suspect novels. In doing so, I noticed for the first time, a small point of style in these stories which had previously escaped me. It registered this time only because I'd subconsciously noticed it in the Duke Grant stories. It seems that the author in question insisted upon providing sound effects like *Blam! Blam!* and *Br-r-r-r-r-r-r!* everytime a pistol or Tommy gun went off in one of his yarns. It was a silly little habit unique to this writer, but it provided the first link between Duke Grant and *Doc Savage*.

I then went into deeper comparisons of prose style and the like. Two things came of this: I definitely established the authorship of most of my suspect novels and I built, from those not belonging to this new author, another block of questionable stories, which I later would identify, also.

**T**HE Forgotten Kenneth Robeson was a man named Harold A. Davis.

Those of you now reading that statement are doubtless experiencing the same hollow sensation I felt when the first quiet realization hit me. Who is Harold A. Davis? After a year's search, I had the name--but the name meant nothing to me. It might even have been a pen name, for all I knew. Who *is* Harold A. Davis? My first inkling came quickly, when I discovered an article titled "The Police Reporter in Action" (*The Shadow* 3/1/43) under the byline Harold A. Davis, Managing Editor, *Newsday*.

Harold A. Davis was real.

That established, I contacted Mrs. Norma Dent and John Nanovic and, to my surprise, both remembered Davis and confirmed my discovery. More than that, Mrs. Dent mentioned something important. It seems that Davis was one of Lester Dent's co-workers when the latter was a telegraph operator and maintenance man for the Associated Press in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

This innocent-sounding bit of biography assumes some importance when Lester Dent's

advent into the world of pulp writing is recalled: Dent was working the night shift for AP on the *Tulsa World* in 1929 when he casually noticed a fellow worker pounding away at the typewriter. When Dent inquired, this man replied that he was writing a magazine story.

Dent laughed.

Then he noticed a sizable check on the man's desk. As he later wrote to a friend: "I was overcome by feelings of greed and shock." Dent stopped laughing and started writing. He sold a story, then another, and was called to New York in January, 1931 to be a contract writer for Dell--Doc Savage would come later.

Now it may have been that the fourth floor night shift on the *Tulsa World* was a haven for fledgling pulp writers, but it seems more probable that Harold Davis was the shadowy figure in that well-known story. In which case, he set off an important chain of events that changed the course of several lives and, if for no other reason, he must be considered one of the most important of the Kenneth Robesons.

**I**F further evidence of Harold Davis' importance is needed, his impressive list of Doc Savage novels should suffice:

<i>The Mental Wizard</i>	(#51 3/37)
<i>The Land of Fear</i>	(#52 6/37)
<i>The Golden Peril</i>	(#59 12/37)
<i>The Living Fire Menace</i>	(#61 1/38)
<i>The Mountain Monster</i>	(#62 2/38)
<i>The Munitions Master</i>	(#67 8/38)
<i>The Green Death</i>	(#70 11/38)
<i>Merchants of Disaster</i>	(#73 7/39)
<i>The Crimson Serpent</i>	(#78 8/39)
<i>The Purple Dragon</i>	(#89 9/40)
<i>Devils of the Deep</i>	(#94 10/40)

Needless to say, Harold Davis was quite a success as a ghost writer.

This success is due largely to the fact that Davis, like Dent and unlike Ryerson Johnson, wrote in the direct, simple style of a newspaperman. With Johnson, Dent was looking for a writing partner who could produce a novel that could be written into his style; but in Harold Davis, Dent found someone who could write in a credible imitation of his style - and with minimum revision.

Lester Dent introduced Davis to writing for Street & Smith after Davis came from Tulsa to New York in 1932 to work for the *New York Journal American*. Davis wrote his first Doc stories in early 1936 preparatory to Dent's second treasure hunting venture. As with Johnson's first attempt, Dent had to revise Davis' first Doc, *The Mental Wizard*, quite heavily. But his next, *The Land of Fear*, he left substantially untouched. Both novels were submit-

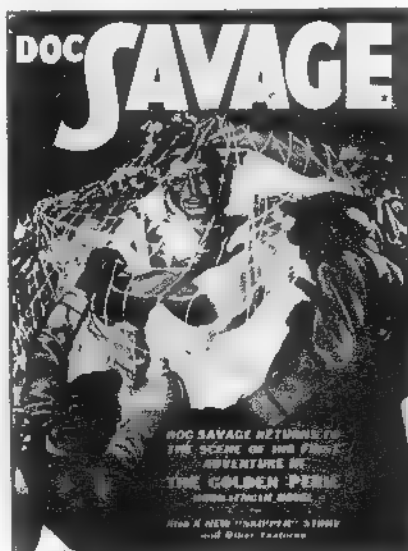
ted simultaneously, and this became the pattern for many of the Davis submissions. Often, Dent would walk into the Street & Smith offices with two manuscripts under his arm - one of his own and a Davis.

**W**HEN Harold Davis began writing his first Doc Savage novels, he read the current issues for background. It happened that *The Fantastic Island* was one of these. As a consequence, *The Land of Fear* reflects *The Fantastic Island* in many ways. Davis picked up on Johnson's interpretation of Doc's eye color - gold-flecked (or gold-flaked) instead of flake-gold--and he borrowed Doc's yacht, *Seven Seas*, which Johnson had introduced in his novel.

At the same time, Laurence Donovan's *Murder Melody* and *Murder Mirage* were published and Davis, unwitting, read these, too. The worst thing that he picked up from Donovan is Monk's awful expression, "Howlin' Calamities."

A full year passed between Davis' first two and third Doc novels, but that third entry would be an important one. Evidently, an editorial decision was made to write a sequel to *The Man of Bronze* and Lester Dent didn't feel like retreading old ground. Instead, he gave the sequel (and maybe the plot) to Davis.

*The Golden Peril*, which was selected to be reprinted with *The Man of Bronze* and *The Monsters* in the abortive 1943 *Doc Savage Annual*, is undoubtedly Davis' most important contribution to the series. Aside from being a classic and historical novel, it witnessed the end of the Johnson/Donovan chain of influence and initiated the Davis chain. In order to write *The Golden Peril*, Davis had to read *The Man of Bronze*, and from this he picked up out-dated descriptions of Doc and his men. Thus, once again, Long Tom is in the habit of tugging at his ears and Johnny Littlejohn goes back to wearing glasses instead of his monocle in all succeeding Davis stories, but his last!



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On his own, Harold Davis seemed uncertain as to whether Doc's hair was a darker or lighter bronze than his skin. (It should be darker) He also created more confusion with Chemistry. Dent often described the creature as a two-foot forty-pound ape. However, he sometimes didn't bother to specify the description apart from Chemistry's close resemblance to Monk Mayfair. Davis must have read this comparison and taken it quite literally. He depicted the ape as a near-gorilla at over five feet and 250 pounds--Monk's specifications!

Curiously, none of the Davis novels feature Pat Savage.

**I**F Harold Davis was as prone to err as were the other auxiliary Kenneth Robesons, he was something they were not: he was an innovator. He tried (not always with success) to introduce new ideas and gadgets into the series.

With his second entry, *The Land of Fear*, Davis replaced Doc's carry-all vest with an equipment belt called the "kit." The kit, resembling an Army cartridge belt, seemed to have caught editorial and artistic fancy alike. It was featured prominently on the cover and in the interior illustrations for *The Living Fire Menace*. Davis seems to have gotten the belt from Dent's *The South Pole Terror*, which first featured such a belt, but Davis used it to supplant the usual vest for gadget-toting. After a few novels, however, Davis abandons the belt.

In *Merchants of Disaster*, Davis introduced infra-red wrist communicators as the equipment of an enemy spy ring. Later, in *The Crimson*

*Serpent* and *The Purple Dragon*, Doc Savage adapts them for his own use.

Davis also tinkered with a number of protective suits for Doc and his men. One, composed of a transparent asbestos, saw use in *The Land of Fear* and *The Mountain Monster*. A later improvement involved the use of chemical refrigerants to fight intense heat. When a thermite fire

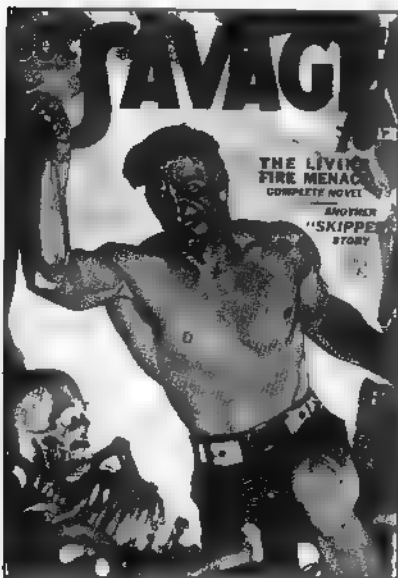
destroys a building around Doc and Long Tom in *Merchants of Disaster*, they survive the holocaust looking like a pair of animate snowmen, thanks to these suits. Another variation, a transparent diving suit, sees action in *Devils of the Deep*. These suits were used in conjunction with concentrated-oxygen tablets, something Davis extrapolated from a chemical featured in *Mystery Under the Sea* (#33 2/36). These tablets, which supply oxygen to the user's system independent of respiration, were the only Davis innovation that Dent used in his stories. (See *The Submarine Mystery*; also see "The Bronze Genius" in *The Man Behind Doc Savage* for more on these Davis gadgets.)

In his final two novels, Davis resurrected some equipment which Dent had not taken advantage of in some time. *The Purple Dragon* was the first novel since the classic *The Annihilist* (#22 12/34) to deal substantially with Doc's Crime College. In it, Davis sets the operation of the College as far back as 1929, and it might be argued that Lester Dent would disagree with that date. The College is never featured again. Then, in *Devils of the Deep*, Doc's polar submarine, the *Helldiver*, is hauled out of dry-dock for the first time since *Death in Silver* (#20 10/34). Oddly, Davis seems unaware of the craft's name. It, too, is never employed in the series again.

**T**HE character of the Harold Davis novels can be broken down into two distinct types: those, such as *The Land of Fear* and *The Mountain Monster*, which seem to have been written by Davis from Lester Dent plot outlines and others that are markedly different from anything that might be traced back to Lester Dent. *The Munitions Master* and *Merchants of Disaster* fall into this latter category.

Within the Dent-assisted tales, the differences between them and pure Dent novels are not as noticable. The prose lacks the Dent zip, but is still fast-paced. His characterizations are off-key, however. His Doc Savage is more openly gentle, disposed to smiling often, and is distinctly mellowier than Dent's interpretation. He is also less effective, often falling into successions of traps. Curiously, he carries a machine pistol despite the Dent Doc Savage policy against firearms. (Davis also erroneously describes this weapon as having its ammo drum mounted above the breech) Davis' handling of the secondary characters is equally unsure. He attaches bits of description to the wrong character and Monk and Ham especially are depicted as a sappy duo.

But it's Davis' solo efforts that are the most interesting. The best way to describe them, perhaps, is to call them off-beat. They



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are highly imaginative, yet overly melodramatic at the same time.

In spirit, they harken back to the Operator 5 novels written by Fredrick C. Davis and one wonders if they might not have been related--or, more probably, if Harold Davis might not have been a reader of *Operator 5*. The common theme here is international conflict and intrigue on a high scale. *The Munitions Master*, *Merchants of Disaster* and *Devils of the Deep*, especially, are in this pattern. They all involve would-be world rulers and their attempts to destroy America by striking at her military strength with bizarre weapons. In fact, the oxygen destroyer used in *Merchants of Disaster* might have been borrowed from the earlier Operator 5 novel, *The Green Death Mists* (11/34).

THE scope of these novels covers more territory than would a Dent story. *The Munitions Master*, especially, is daring. In it, Davis sends the *entire world* teetering on the brink of a new World War as a master criminal sows revolution and destruction in dozens of nations at once. As is the similar *Devils of the Deep*, Doc Savage is branded an international criminal. By contrast, Lester Dent never dealt with anything greater in scope than a revolution, or a war between two countries; and his Doc Savage was never accused of anything worse than murder.

While Lester Dent utilized only one main antagonist per story, Davis' solo efforts feature at least two in equal partnership, who often fall to slaughtering each other at novel's end. Unlike Dent's innocuous villains who mingle unsuspected with the cast of characters, Davis' foes are remote and satanic; they are also such stock figures of evil as to be interchangeable from novel to novel.

Harold Davis seems to have learned to write from watching old movie serials. Cliffhanger chapter endings abound. In fact, Davis' yarns are sustained, essentially, by a progression of death traps and escapes intended to advance the plot. All the cliches are here: hero falls off cliff; hero is shot at point-blank range; hero is shoved into raging furnace; hero's plane crashes with all aboard. Sometimes, this works well. *The Golden Peril* clicks along as smoothly as a freight going by, just on such devices.

On the other hand, in *The Munitions Master*, the plot is frequently derailed. Doc always escapes by "some clever trick," but Davis' tricks aren't always that clever and his repertoire seems limited. Davis' favorite trick involves killing the hero beyond any shadow of doubt--then he blithely informs the reader

that the victim was *someone else* disguised as the hero. This tired gag recurs throughout *The Munitions Master* and for an example of illogic and absurdity, read Chapter 16 where an identity switch is pulled in the middle of a raging fight in full view of witnesses!

DESPITE his failings (or even because of them) Harold Davis was a memorable Kenneth

Robeson. He was an imaginative writer who brought some fresh ideas and unusual plots into the series. As a well-traveled crime reporter, he introduced authentic details about the underworld. (The character of crime reporter Gerald Pettybloom in *The Crimson Serpent* Davis may have based upon himself.) Within the Harold Davis novels are to be found world dictators; amazons; a monster spider; men of living flame; fiends who reduce their victims to dry skeletons or suck the oxygen from their lungs; and a variety of lost lands. There is the *deja vu* of *The Golden Peril* alongside the atmosphere of impending war in *Merchants of Disaster*.

All told, the Doc Savage series is far richer for Harold Davis' contributions to it.

WE don't know the full story of Harold Davis' drafting into Doc Savage but, as Lester Dent's efforts on behalf of up-and-coming writers were legendary, he may have sub-contracted some novels to Davis in order to advance the latter's writing career, as well as to reduce Dent's work-load.

In any case, Harold Davis clearly enjoyed his pulp writing. Lester Dent, in turn, also had a bit of fun with Davis. In two of his successive novels, Lester Dent left behind an involved and elaborate clue to Davis' identity:

*The Feathered Octopus* opens with an attempt to capture Doc Savage by a character named "Tobias Weaver," who affects outdated clothes and a frayed beaver hat. In Dent's next novel, *The Pirate's Ghost*, which is submitted on the heels of two Davis yarns, there appears a reference to a "Harold A. Beaver." In Chapter 11, a gadget

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alleged to print out messages from the dead emits one from Harold A. Beaver, deceased, who reveals that his wife has been wrongly imprisoned for his murder and he names the true culprit. Of course, like Tobias Weaver, this is part of a criminal ruse.

Association is the key to this elaborate clue: Harold A. Davis; Harold A. Beaver; Tobias Weaver of the beaver hat--remember Davis' character, Duke Grant, who also wore a beaver hat?

**H**AROLD A. DAVIS was born in Lamar, Colorado in 1902. He had had extensive newspaper experience before joining the *Tulsa World* and he quit that paper to join the staff of the *New York News American* in 1932, a year after Dent's move to New York. In 1935, he became assistant telegraph editor for the *New York Daily News*, where he worked with Alan Hathway. He remained with that paper for six years, during which he wrote the bulk of his pulp fiction--the Duke Grant stories; the Bill Wheeler series in *The Skipper*; a few Skipper shorts and many others. But his greatest work--his eleven Joe Savage novels--was never publicly linked to him.

In 1940, Davis' pulp writing abruptly ceases. He wrote his last Joe novel, *Devils of the Deep*, in April of that year. One month later, Alicia Patterson, daughter of the *New York Daily News* publisher, enticed him away from that paper to become managing editor of the about-to-be launched *Newsday*. As Alicia Patterson's right arm, he organized the paper's editorial staff and helped plan its format. A contemporary recalls Harold Davis:

"A little fellow and mild mannered, he usually wore a green eye shade and seldom spoke above a whisper. During most of his working hours in the office, he drank Scotch out of an ice tea container and he made no fuss except when he got at the typewriter to change a story that he didn't like or to "punch up" an editorial. Then there would be a brief rattling as he faced the typewriter, as though a burst were being fired by a machinegun. It would stop abruptly and the paper would be whipped out of the machine, the take done. He would scan it, make a few marks, then slither noiselessly out to the composing room."

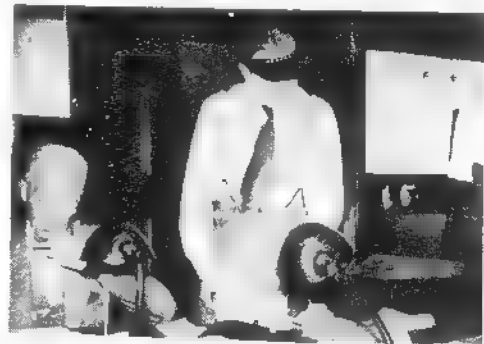
Davis' tenure as *Newsday's* first managing editor was both brief and trying. He worked day and night on the paper--and with an increasingly inexperienced staff, as the Draft was absorbing his best men. His long hours aggravated his personal life and in 1943, his wife Del divorced him. Davis took a leave of absence to

pull himself together. Just before this, he had met and fell in love with a mysterious Chicago model whom Davis referred to only as "M". When Davis returned to *Newsday* late in 1943, "M" was constantly on his mind and he spent a small fortune keeping in touch with her by phone--a foolish move as Davis had constant money problems. Then, the IRS attached Davis' checks for non-payment of back taxes. Inundated by problems, Davis resigned in January, 1944. Alan Hathway, whom Davis had installed as city editor months before, took his place.

Davis' next movements are mysterious. He remarried within the year, so it might be assumed that he flew to Chicago and married "M." Whatever the case, he had two daughters by this marriage, which seemed to have ended in either another divorce--or in tragedy. He rejoined the *Daily News*, possibly as a foreign correspondent, as he turned up later in Moscow.

In 1953, Davis moved to California to become telegraph editor for the *Los Angeles Daily News*. He left his daughters behind in New York. His life, at this point, looked bleak. Then, after only two years, the paper folds, and Harold Davis is out of a job.

This must have been the final blow in an unhappy life for, just months later on January 8, 1955, Harold A. Davis dies of a "liver ailment" in Los Angeles General Hospital. He was only 52 years old. As a veteran newspaperman, Harold Davis' obituary was carried by AP, and *Newsday* ran it in full. Six paragraphs in length, it detailed Davis' long newspaper career, which has since been effaced by the passage of time. Nowhere in it was there mention of his pulp writing, the work that has revived his name so many years after his death.



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#### Five: *The Last Ghost*.

**I**N 1937, the last of the 1935 novels ran out, and it happened that the last Donovan stories were being released with the first Davis entries. The result was a *faux pas* wherein two similar yarns, *Mad Eyes* and *The Land of Fear*

appeared consecutively. Both novels involve criminals who impersonate Doc Savage to further their own ends, and the cover of *Mad Eyes* could be affixed to *The Land of Fear* with no discernible difference.

Lester Dent returned to Europe in 1938 with his wife, Norma, and his secretary. The trip began well. Foresightedly, Dent brought a stone out of every country they visited to make a fireplace of them in the house that was only an idea then. All the while, he dictated new stories to his secretary every day.

The Dent party happened to be encamped in Vienna, Austria, when that country was annexed by Germany. This was in March, 1938, the same month that Dent wrote *Fortress of Solitude*. They went from there on to Prague, Czechoslovakia, where Dent was questioned by the Nazis for taking unauthorized photographs--probably with the equipment purchased during the *Hindenburg* misadventure. That was enough for them and the party scampered back to the States by way of Germany, Holland and England.

This trip seems to have lasted from February through April, 1938. During this time, Dent submitted *The Giggling Ghosts*, *Fortress of Solitude*, and *The Devil Genghis*, and one Davis novel, *The Green Death*. An interesting curiosity attendant to Dent's three stories is that Colonel John Renwick is called Major John Renwick throughout them! This lapse is corrected with *Mad Mesa* (#71 1/39).

By contrast, 1939 was a quieter year and and it was then that Lester Dent decided to settle down permanently in La Plata. Since 1935, he had been spreading his time about equally among Miami, New York and La Plata. Characteristically, that year he set a Gadget Man story, "The Minks and the Weasels" (*Crime Busters* 5/39), in La Plata and a Doc novel, *The Evil Gnome*, in the nearest city, Kirksville.

Dent proceeded to design and build his famous House of Gadgets in La Plata, and it's said that the citizenry would line up in rows just to see him drive his yellow Packard convertible into a garage that opened automatically by photo-electric cell! With the start of a new decade, Dent sold the *Albatross* and bought a dairy farm, which he would run for the rest of his life. His adventuring days were mainly over and Dent, with his wife, his Great Dane, Johnny, and innumerable canaries, settled down for good.

THE task of setting himself up in La Plata left Dent with limited time to write Doc Savage, and his main ghost writer, Harold Davis, only managed to produce one novel in 1939 and two in 1940. A new Kenneth Robeson was needed.

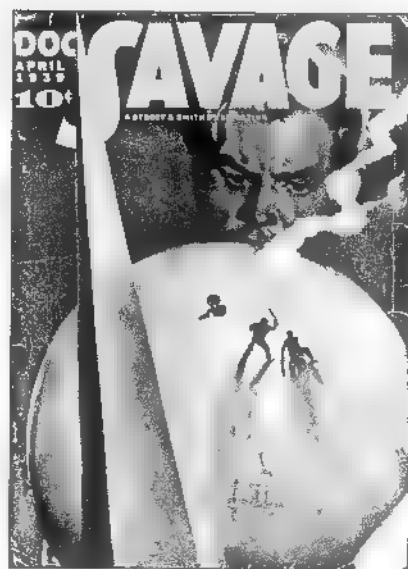
In his editorial for the March, 1939 issue of *Doc Savage*, John Nanovic related the following story:

"Most of you have heard of the New York World's Fair...Since the Fair is virtually in our back yard, and since we were rather interested in the work, what would be more natural that to

place a Doc Savage novel in that locale? "Armed with plenty of little note cards on which to take notes; camera with which to take pictures; and permission to go through every nook and corner of the Fair grounds, we set out with Kenneth Robeson to look over the possibilities. We were given beautiful and extensive maps of the entire grounds; were hoisted high up inside the Trylon and taken inside the Perisphere. The perisphere is a huge ball which will seemingly be floating in water; the trylon is a three-cornered shaft, coming to a point almost eight hundred feet in the air. Some people, avoiding the big technical names, merely call it the 'ball and the bat,' or, if they want to be a bit sarcastic, they call it the 'eight ball and the cue stick.' Anyway, there it was, and there we were, and right in the midst of our trip, one of the steel workers on the trylon, in passing comment to us, said, "This would be a honey of a place for Doc Savage to get into!" The net result was a half-hour of enthusiastic talk about Doc Savage, nothing less than an autographed copy of the magazine by Kenneth Robeson--and proof that *World's Fair Goblin* is a real natural."

In actuality, there were two "Kenneth Robsons" along on that tour, Lester Dent (who no doubt autographed that magazine) and one other. A new ghost had been chosen and *World's Fair Goblin* was to be his first assignment.

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WHEN I established Harold Davis as the main author of my first list of suspect novels, I had a couple of stories left over which were not his. In examining these, I determined their essential characteristics and, to my surprise discovered others that belonged with them. It was difficult going as, unlike the Davis novels, Lester Dent had done extensive revisions of these; but, in the end, I isolated a new block of nine novels which I felt confident was the work of a single unknown author.

As with Harold Davis, the first link to this author's true identity came about partially by accident. At the same time that I established through the Street & Smith files that Laurence Donovan was the real author of his nine novels, I unearthed two peculiar manuscript tracer cards in Lester Dent's file. The cards for *The Flying Goblin* and *Bequest of Evil* both had a certain familiar name typed in as the author. But that name had later been X'd out and Lester Dent's name was substituted for it and the cards transferred to the Dent file, where they lay unnoticed for thirty-five years.

The two novels in question happened to be among my suspect stories and, with this clue, I needed only to compare the style of this author's known work to these stories (not as easy as it may sound) until I was satisfied myself that this man had written all nine. A year later, I would uncover two more such stories.

The author's name was William G. Bogart.

THE name of William Bogart is no strange one to Doc Savage indexes. He is known to have written three novels during the closing years of the series. But as these stories are widely regarded as minor entries and, as Bogart has been credited with the fewest and least of the series, he has been given short shrift for years. It should come as quite a shock, then, to learn that William Bogart wrote more Doc Savage novels than any other Kenneth Robeson, save Lester Dent.

In total, William Bogart wrote fourteen novels:

<i>World's Fair Goblin</i>	(#75 4/39)
<i>Hex</i>	(#79 11/39)
<i>The Angry Ghost</i>	(#82 2/40)
<i>The Spotted Men</i>	(#85 3/40)
<i>The Flying Goblin</i>	(#88 7/40)
<i>Tunnel Terror</i>	(#90 8/40)
<i>The Awful Dynasty</i>	(#93 11/40)
<i>Bequest of Evil</i>	(#97 2/41)
<i>The Magic Forest</i>	(#101 4/42)
<i>Fire and Ice</i>	(#161 7/46)
<i>Death in Little Houses</i>	(#164 10/46)
<i>The Disappearing Lady</i>	(#166 12/46)
<i>Target For Death</i>	(#167 1/47)
<i>The Death Lady</i>	(#169 2/47)

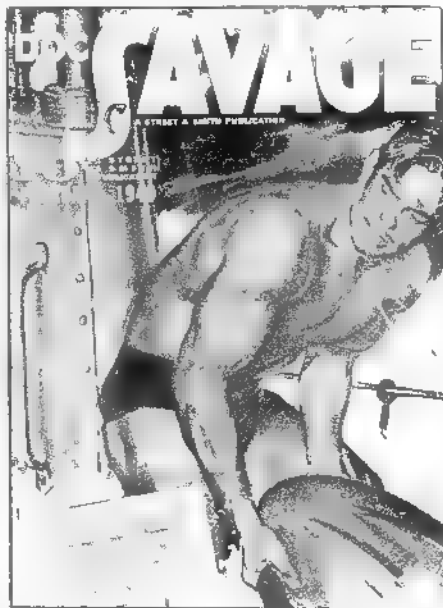
WILLIAM BOGART was the only ghost writer to produce two discrete blocks of Doc novels, one through Lester Dent and the other for Street & Smith. He was also the last auxiliary Kenneth Robeson to remain active, though not the last to be brought into the series.

Bogart had been working under John Nanovic as an associate editor on *Doc Savage* and others through the Thirties. He occupied the Number Three position in Nanovic's office, just below the latter's chief assistant, Morris Ogden Jones, and he wrote frequent short stories on the side for *Doc Savage* and *The Shadow*. According to Walter Gibson, after a number of years editing the magazine, Bogart developed a "natural feel" for the Doc novels and this led to his initial assignments. It may be that he wrote some of his early Doc novels from his editor's desk at Street & Smith in 1938 or 1939.

Somewhere about this time, probably spurred by his drafting into the Doc series, Bogart decided to quit his assistant editorial position and enter into full-time writing. This decision was met with favor and John Nanovic had hopes of grooming Bogart to be a permanent member of his writing stable.

On the surface, William Bogart seemed to have been all set. His knowledge of the *Doc Savage* style and characters provided him all the essential background needed to write *World's Fair Goblin* and his subsequent novels. (He'd even written an earlier story, "World's Fair," for *The Whisperer* 7/37) But, while he did eventually become part of Nanovic's staff of writers and his Doc Savage credits are numerically impressive, his work on the series leaves something to be desired.

The fact is that it's very difficult to judge William Bogart in terms of his Doc Savage work. The nine yarns he penned between 1938 and 1940, at least, relied heavily upon Lester Dent. Dent would appear to have developed the plot outlines for these stories, titled



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them, (compare Bogart's *The Angry Ghost* and *The Awful Dynasty* with Dent's *The Angry Canary* and *The Awful Egg*.) and revised them, as well. The result is a number of good--some very good--Doc Savage novels. But they are also somewhat uneven, owing to the revisions, and the astute reader can discern which chapters are Bogart's and which belong to Dent. According to Ryerson Johnson, Dent used Bogart as a ghost so frequently because Bogart didn't try to get too fancy with his stories, and he always made deadlines.

WHEN Bogart began writing Doc Savage, the length of the novels had been reduced from 50-60,000 words to 45,000 words. Working in this limited format, the Bogart stories are very light-weight. The pattern of his work was set with his first two entries: *World's Fair Goblin* was a fun romp probably written as a publicity tie-in with the Fair; while *Hex*, which involved witches, pixies and haunted houses in Salem, was intended for a special Hallowe'en issue.

Bogart did considerable research for some of his novels: He visited a steel mill for *The Spotted Men*; a tunnel building project for *Tunnel Terror*; and background for *The Flying Goblin* was gleaned from the legends of his Hudson Valley neighborhood. At the same time, many of his novels can be traced back in theme to earlier Dent efforts, and many plots and gadgets clearly result from Lester Dent's input. There are many examples of this, but one is more interesting than most. In *The All-White Elf* (#98 3/41), a minor mystery develops over a search for a

criminal hide-out on Isle Royal. Everyone hunts for the island, unaware that they should be looking for a boat called *Isle Royal*. Dent evidently thought this too neat a trick to have wasted as only part of a story for, but three months after he submits *The All-White Elf*, he handed Bogart the outline for *The Magic Forest*, which utilizes this trick as the central my-

stery! Nor is this the last time it's used.

Dent seemed to have started out giving Bogart his outlines, and then he let him solo for a couple of novels. *The Spotted Men* and *Tunnel Terror* seem to be pure Bogart--and the results are disappointing. They are distinctly flat pieces of writing. Thereafter, at least during this phase of Bogart's ghosting, Dent goes back to providing outlines and revising Bogart's prose. Most of the Bogart stories brim with a peculiar Lester Dent concept: weird phenomena and criminals carrying such tags as ghost, goblin, pixie, etc.

Despite his background as an editor on *Doc Savage*, William Bogart displayed a few idiosyncracies of his own. Doc's eyes, according to Bogart, are either a "rich flake-gold" or simply "gold"--not too bad, but as often as not, he describes Doc's hair and skin as golden, too. Further, Monk emits such choice expletives as "jeepers!" and "gollywookus!" and somewhere Bogart got hold of a Davis novel and Johnny is again wearing those glasses. As with all of the other authors, these are minor discrepancies, but their value as indicators of authorship is enormous--if sometimes confusing.

WILLIAM BOGART'S pulp writing career began in 1935 when he sold his first story to *Thrilling Detective*. At that time, he was an associate editor under John Nanovic, and he freelanced from that position. His major writing period, however, was between 1938 and 1943, when he wrote his Doc Savage novels, some Skipper shorts, and some Danny Garrett stories in *The Shadow*--these last as "Grant Lane." He wrote most of his Doc novels in 1939 and 1940, Lester Dent contracting for them during his frequent trips to New York. When Dent returned to Missouri for good in 1940, he ceased to subcontract novels to Bogart, (or to anyone else, for that matter) although, as we'll see, Bogart will return to the series in later years.

In 1941, Bogart moved from Cold Spring, New York, back to Cincinnati, Ohio, where he had previously lived. He continued to write for Street & Smith and became a lecturer on the short story at the University of Cincinnati. His first two hardcover novels, *Sands Street* and *Hell on Friday*, were published about this time. He continued to write steadily until 1943, when the Street & Smith market dried up due to the war paper-shortage and cancelled magazines. Luckily, Walter Gibson got wind of an opening in advertising about this time, and he mentioned it to John Nanovic. Though the latter wasn't interested, he, in turn, passed the word on to Bogart, who was now working as a relay truck driver in his spare time.

Although William Bogart had forsaken his



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writing career for advertising, he still had a few good stories yet in him, as will be related. But, by and large, his pulp writing was at a close by 1943, and he has since faded in to obscurity. Little is known of his life, as little biography ever survives the pulp writer who toils, quietly and briefly, under house- and pen names. We know that he was born in Vermont, lived in Boston (He seems to have had some affection for that city, *Hex*, *The Angry Ghost* and *The Disappearing Lady* are laid in Boston) and Cincinnati before his Doc Savage work. His last known address was in Louisville, Kentucky, and he may still be living. As for the man, himself, Ryerson Johnson recalls just this:

"What kind of guy was Bogart? I didn't know him so very well. Les introduced me to him as somebody who was going to write some Docs for him. A "medium" kind of guy, is my remaining impression. Undramatic, kind of unimaginative I thought--but if he did all those Docs I must have been wrong about that. I really didn't know him well enough to judge. Quiet, dependable. Actually, I didn't know Les had any other ghosts except Bogart and myself."

#### Six: *The New Apprentice.*

IN many ways, 1940 was much like 1935 in terms of the writing that went into *Doc Savage*. As in 1935, Lester Dent was very busy--so busy that he had to abandon both his *Crime Busters* series, the Gadget Man and Ed Stone, in 1939. It took as full two years to publish all of the 1935 manuscripts, and it wasn't until 1942 that the last of the thirteen Doc novels produced by Lester Dent, Harold Davis and William Bogart in 1940 saw print. Certainly there was no pressing need for more.

Nonetheless, Street & Smith contracted for four supplementary novels in that year. This was the first time that the firm itself sought out a new Kenneth Robeson since Laurence Donovan, and perhaps for similar reasons.

Try as they might, Street & Smith was unable to equal the success of *The Shadow* and *Doc Savage*. Variants such as *Nick Carter*, *Pete Rice*, and *Bill Barnes* had modest runs. The imitative *Skipper* and *The Whisperer* fared no better; and even the support of their best writers couldn't sustain *Crime Busters*. But in 1939, *The Avenger*, an amalgam of the two winners, showed enough promise that they decided to reactivate *The Whisperer*, then running as a feature in *The Shadow*. As Laurence Donovan had left,

and Alan Hathway was doing the *Whisperer* shorts, the job fell to him.

ALAN HATHWAY had only been writing pulp fiction for five years, and all of that short stories; so Street & Smith, remembering the method of training given Laurence Donovan prior to his writing of the earlier *Whisperer*, decided to apprentice him on *Doc Savage* first. If he could handle *Doc Savage*, he could handle *The Whisperer*, they may have reasoned. If not, Lester Dent could salvage the Doc novels and a new writer could be found elsewhere.

Hathway's introduction into the series worked in Lester Dent's favor, as well. Hathway stepped in just as Harold Davis was stepping out, and about this time, Dent was scouting around for a replacement. Sometime early in 1940, Lester Dent approached veteran pulp writer Edmond Hamilton with an offer to let him ghost some Doc novels. As Hamilton related in a letter to Steve Riley:

"I knew Dent only slightly, from meeting him at writers' gatherings in New York. (He was a wonderful guy!) He had read *Captain Future*, and made the suggestion to me...I was flattered, but had to say I was too damn busy with Capt. Future to think of more work."

Dent's offer is hardly surprising, as *Captain Future* is strongly derivative of *Doc Savage* and was, in fact, created by a good friend of Dent's--Standard editor Mort Weisinger--as a *Doc Savage* of the future! It's too bad that Hamilton refused the request, as he'd no doubt have turned out some very interesting Doc *Savage* novels. However, it worked out all right for Dent, as Hathway seems to have filled the gap left by Harold Davis and, it turned out, worked out well for Street & Smith at the same time.

Alan

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Hathway wrote only two Doc Savage novels early in 1940 before being handed *The Whisperer*, and he seems to have begun his first Whisperer novel just days after passing in his second Doc. To say the least, he was found acceptable for the assignment. He wrote four Whisperers, then did two more Doc novels. This, either to take up his slack time while reaction to *The Whisperer* was awaited, or because he was originally contracted to write four Doc novels and Street & Smith was too eager to get *The Whisperer* going--or both. In any case, Alan Hathway's four entries were:

*The Devil's Playground* (#96 1/41)  
*The Headless Men* (#92 6/41)  
*The Mindless Monsters* (#102 9/41)  
*The Rustling Death* (#103 1/42)

He resumed *The Whisperer* after his fourth Doc story. Unfortunately for Street & Smith, this last attempt to supplement their character book line was crushed, along with *The Avenger* and others, by the war paper-shortage in 1942.

ALAN HATHWAY was employed by the *New York Daily News* at the time he began to write for Street & Smith in 1936. As noted, he worked with Harold Davis on that paper. They seem to be close friends and, as is sometimes the case with fellow writers, their respective works reflect one another. The character of the Hathway Doc entries is curious. He managed to mimic the Lester Dent style with uncanny ability, but where he doesn't write like Dent, his prose resembles that of a more polished Harold Davis!

While there is no evidence that Lester Dent had any input in the Hathway novels, there are indications that Davis coached his friend on these. Consider the duplication in Davis' *The Crimson Serpent* and Hathway's *The Devil's Playground*. Both novels concern inexplicable deaths which are revealed to have been caused by iron maidens designed to leave their victims with wounds of seemingly supernatural origin. Clearly, Hathway got the idea from Davis.

Hathway's proximity to Davis resulted in the perpetuation of some of the latter's peculiar touches. Doc's eyes are "gold-flaked;" Chemistry is over-sized; those oxygen pills are in evidence; and Hathway, like Davis, found no use for Pat Savage in any of his yarns. Though Lester Dent had abandoned dirigibles in his novels in 1936, Harold Davis continued their use in *The Green Death* and *The Crimson Serpent*, and it was in Hathway's *The Headless Men* that the last of a proud line of airships is destroyed.

An innovator as well, Hathway's most interesting invention was the rocket-powered,

submersible canoe which was showcased in *The Devil's Playground*.

Alan Hathway must have been a constant reader of *Doc Savage* as his duplication of the Dent style shows not only an ability to approximate the prose, but also a sensitivity to Dent's more subtle touches. Dent's fondness for the word goblin, for example. He also seems to have

lifted character names and even whole Dent paragraphs to reinforce the similarity. He was undoubtedly the most conscientious of the other Robesons and his plots and characterizations were quite solid, as well. He carried much of this technique into *The Whisperer* and modified the magazine into the *Doc Savage* mold, whereas it had been a *Shadow* imitation before.

The Doc Savage novels of Alan Hathway were well executed. Though not as imaginative as those of Harold Davis, they are superior in construction and writing. In this quartet of tales, Doc Savage encounters an assortment of masked killers, death rays, robotic supermen, and foreign subversives--the latter a staple by this time. It's ironic that Hathway, who would have made a perfect ghost writer for Lester Dent, was never employed by Dent, but by Street & Smith, who found other use for him.

CHICAGO born, Alan Hathway got his start in journalism during the "Roaring Twenty's" at the *NEW YORK DAILY NEWS*. His pulp writing career seemed to have been limited to Street & Smith (as was Davis') and the years 1936 through 1943, and he was a newspaperman during most of that period. He penned scores of short stories, including the Keyhole series which ran in *Crime Busters* and most of the Whisperer shorts in *The Shadow*. In addition, he did several lead novels for *Clues* and *Mystery*. His major credits, and his best work, were the Doc Savage and Whisperer lead novels that he wrote under the Kenneth Robeson and Clifford Goodrich house names.

While still on the staff of the *New York*

copyright 1941 Street & Smith







ALAN HATHWAY

Davis' position while he was gone and Hathway got into a violent confrontation with the man, who resigned as a result. This only delayed the inevitable as far as Harold Davis was concerned and when Davis left *Newsday* himself, Alan Hathway was installed in his place, possibly at Davis' request, although Hathway was a good friend of Alicia Patterson, too. Hathway remained with *Newsday* until he retired in 1967 and the paper won a Pulitzer Prize in 1954 under Hathway's management.

I contacted Alan Hathway in July, 1976. It was a disappointing experience. Other than to say "Those days are ancient history and I'm not interested in talking about them" and "I don't believe I ever met Dent," he refused to recall anything of his Street & Smith days. He died on April 15, 1977 in Palm Beach, Florida.

#### Seven: Renaissance and Sunset.

JUST as it took two years for all the 1935 manuscripts to be published, it wasn't until 1942 that the last of the 1940 output--Bogart's *The Magic Forest* and Hathway's *The Rustling Death*--finally saw print. Lester Dent, as a consequence, needed only submit eight novels in 1941, and he renewed his interest in flying in that year. Also in 1941, he tried to convince a party of his fellow writers to join his expedition to Alaska. Dent wanted to bag a polar bear. Not unreasonably, they declined and the venture never materialized.

*Daily News*, Alan Hathway often pitched in as make-up editor during the early days at *Newsday* and Harold Davis later made him city editor. Hathway paid Davis back when the latter went on his leave of absence in 1943. An ambitious staffer attempted to usurp

The next few years were quiet ones. With his dairy farm, the aerial photography service he created out of his fleet of planes and the travel restrictions of the War, Lester Dent now writes exclusively for *Doc Savage*. As a consequence of his rededication to the magazine, he sub-contracts no novels from 1941 to 1945; nor does Street & Smith find occasion to draft any new Kenneth Robesons into *Doc Savage*.

This was not a sedate period, however. The War paper-shortage hit Street & Smith badly. By 1943, all but *Doc Savage*, *The Shadow*, *Astounding*, *Detective Story*, *Western Story* and *Love Story Magazine* remained of their pulp line. In the shake-up, many writers and editors found themselves out of work.

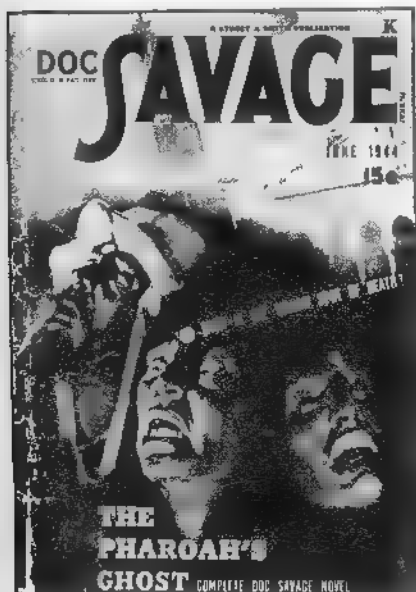
Among them was John Nanovic, who--whether or not he "rode herd" as Ryerson Johnson said--was nonetheless the best editor that *Doc Savage* and *The Shadow* ever had. Office politics had something to do with Nanovic's dismissal, as he had helmed the most consistently successful pulps in the S&S line. Nanovic then embarked upon an equally-successful career in advertising and is today in charge of his own public relations outfit.

At the same time, writers like William Bogart and Ted Tinsley found no market for their writing under the new regime and they deserted the field for journalism, advertising and teaching--a migration which would occur on a larger scale ten years later when the entire pulp market disintegrated.

Both Lester Dent and Walter Gibson held John Nanovic in high regard and his leaving must have been both a shock and a sad occasion for them. It was certainly unfortunate for *Doc Savage* and *The Shadow* as their sudden drop in quality attests.

Charles Moran, who had edited *The Wizard* and *Sport Story*, took over both magazines for about six months, at the end of which they became digests. The only evidence of his editorial hand was when he retitled the first of the digest Doc novels, *The One-Eyed Mystic*, as *According to Plan of a One-Eyed Mystic*, evidently reasoning that a longer title would make up for the smaller magazine--or something like that.

Beginning in December, 1943, William de Grouche, a business manager who had been hired in 1940 to run Street & Smith's comic book line, took over. Although listed as the official editor, a woman named Babette Rosmond was actual editor and she, in turn, delegated part of her work load to a woman sub-editor whose name has since been lost to history. Mrs. Rosmond seems to have concentrated upon magazine policy and building up a new stable of writers for the back of the magazines, while her assistant seems to have been given control over the lead Doc



Savage and Shadow novels--with comical results.

Not knowing any better, this assistant allowed a Doc novel, *The Derelict of Skull Shoal* and a Shadow, *Voodoo Death*, to be published under the true author's names, much to Lester Dent's and Walter Gibson's joy and Street & Smith's embarrassment. Later, when Dent submitted *The Pharaoh's Ghost*, this woman, thinking the word Pharaoh was

spelled incorrectly, reversed the final vowels in Pharaoh in the title and throughout the text. When the proof-reader corrected her, she stubbornly overrode him, and *The Pharaoh's Ghost* became *The Pharooah's Ghost*!

WITH all the strange new faces at Street & Smith, it was probably just as well that Lester Dent now lived in La Plata and seldom dropped into the editorial offices. After the hectic and friendly days of John Nanovic and his staff, it must have been a depressing place by contrast.

However, in 1946 Lester Dent experienced something of a renaissance. That year Joseph T. Shaw reprinted his "Sail" in *The Hard-Boiled Omnibus* as an example of one of the finest stories ever to appear in *Black Mask*. Appearing in the same collection with Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler seems to have rekindled his lost sense of literary worth and he responded by producing three major mystery novels in that year.

His first hardcover novels, *Dead at the Take-Off* and *Lady to Kill*, were published by Crime Club in 1946. His third novel, *Smith is Dead*, appeared inexplicably under the pen name Harmon Cash in *Shadow Mystery*, Feb-March, 1947. It seems to have been reprinted in Great Britain as *Lady So Silent* under his own name. While not enormously successful, they were nevertheless a source of pride for Dent. His other *Black Mask* story, "Angelfish," was reprinted in *Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine* in 1947, also.

In order to write these mysteries, Lester

Dent had to take some time off from *Doc Savage* and he turned to his last active ghost writer, William Bogart, to cover for him. As mentioned, Bogart was by then in advertising having stopped writing for S&S in 1943. But, in 1945, he began to creep back into the pages of *The Shadow*, the fiction writer in him apparently refusing to die.

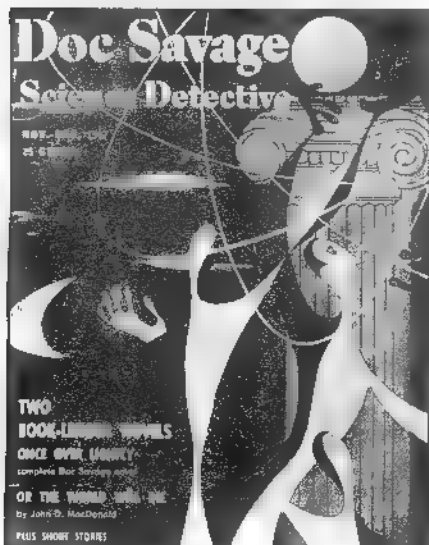
Lester Dent got Bogart to ghost two novels, *Fire and Ice* and *Death in Little Houses*, early in 1946. That wasn't enough and Dent must have prevailed upon Babette Rosmond to allow Bogart to take over the series for a few months. He then wrote *The Disappearing Lady*, *Target for Death* and *The Death Lady* for Mrs. Rosmond, and his name became attached to those novels in the Street & Smith files.

Bogart's last five novels are minor murder mysteries for the most part. But they are interesting in the ways they reflect his earlier work. Just as *World's Fair Goblin* had an ancestor, so does *Fire and Ice*. It derives from a story written under the name Russ Hale, "Turnpike to Tokyo," (*Doc Savage*, 9/43) in that the Alcan Highway is the setting. There's internal evidence to suggest that Bogart titled this novel *Target For Death*, Dent changed it to *Deuces Wild*, and Babette Rosmond junked that for *Fire and Ice*. His last Doc story carried the same title as his earlier novel for *Mystery*, *The Death Lady* (2/40)

In the same year, 1946, Bogart did some writing for Ziff-Davis and at least one of his short novels, "The Crazy Indian" appeared in *Mammoth Adventure*, 11/46. This story, which concerned a group called Adventurer's Inc., is a shameless revision of *The Magic Forest*. Whole chapters of the earlier Doc novel appear in this story, with minor revisions. Though the Doc Savage characters all have their names changed, they are still recognizable. As in *The Magic Forest*, the Crazy Indian turns out to be a boat.

THE years 1946 and 1947 were years of change in *Doc Savage*, and this was due largely to Babette Rosmond and her policies. It's rumored that Lester Dent didn't get along with her very well and she, in turn, evinced a cavalier attitude toward his Doc Savage novels. With the May, 1945 issue, she shunted the lead novel to the back of the book in much the same manner as a parent locking an idiot child in the cellar. Though she repented that move in April, 1945, it became increasingly evident that she thought more of developing her new writing staff than she did of Lester Dent and Doc Savage.

One of her most frequent contributors was John D. MacDonald, now well-known for his Travis Magee novels but at that time an up-and-coming pulp writer. MacDonald began writing in 1946 and that same year he sold a story to Bab-



highly-skilled writer who exemplified the kind of writing she wanted to showcase in her magazines. On the other hand, Lester Dent was an old-line pulp writer who (of all things!) wrote his stories from a master plot-outline. While her attitude toward Dent was certainly unfair, it must be understood in context. The pulps were dying by inches during the Forties and the reading audience, cynical after another World War, was no longer satisfied with pulp fiction and pulp heroes. They wanted more thought, polish and realism in their fiction. Babette Rosmond perceived this and surrounded herself with writers who could meet these new demands. She could hardly get rid of Lester Dent (though Walter Gibson *did* quit during her tenure), so she juggled his novels to make them less conspicuous and showcased the work of MacDonald and others.

The thrust of her policy was to create a slick magazine out of a pulp. During 1947, she moved toward this goal with a vengeance. In an effort to de-emphasize the pulp portion of *Doc Savage*, she re-titled it *Doc Savage, Science Detective* with the September issue. (*The Shadow* had become *Shadow Mystery* earlier that year.) Both magazines became digest sized, semi-slicks replete with modern, abstract covers. Mrs. Rosmond solved her problem with the lead novels by instituting a policy whereby each issue would feature two lead novels of equal length. The alternate novel would be a mystery written by MacDonald or another of her staff. Often these other novels got the cover space, but the new covers were so abstract, it was sometimes hard to tell.

ette Rosmond, whom he describes as "A slight, dark, spry gal in her twenties, a very wry pyrotechnic conversationalist." Over the next two years, MacDonald, under various names, had about fifty stories appear in *Doc Savage* and *The Shadow*, often two per issue.

John D. MacDonald seems to have been a favorite of Mrs. Rosmond. He was, of course, a literate and

CONSIDERING this trend, the next near-development is less surprising that it seemed inevitable. In *Bronze Shadows* #3 (2/66) John MacDonald related the story of how he was asked to join the ranks of the Kenneth Robesons:

"In 1947, Babs Rosmond asked me, very cautiously and tentatively, if I would like to try a Doc Savage. I have the vague memory that Lester Dent was ill at the time. I do remember that I certainly had need of the money. I told her that I would let her know. I got out some of the back copies of the magazine which I had saved because they had contained stories by me. For the first time I read two Doc Savages all the way through. I did some fretting and some pacing and finally phoned Babs at her office at Street & Smith and said that I could not fault them on the basis of action, or moving the people around, but I just could not bring myself to imitate a prose style so wooden, so clumsy, so inadvertently hilarious that it was like a parody of the style you might term Early Comic Book. I said that Doc seemed to me to be a truly great comic figure, and I was sorry to let her down, but... "She said she hadn't really believed that I would do it, and that in fact she would have been a little disappointed if I had given it a try, disappointed in me."

Apparently Lester Dent got well in time to produce a new novel as there are no Doc stories written in 1947 which are not his. (Unless MacDonald is off a year and he was asked in 1946, in which case Babette Rosmond might have turned to him before allowing Bogart to write those last three entries.) But MacDonald's comments paint a clear picture of the attitudes of Mrs. Rosmond.

Lester Dent may have chafed under this tyranny but he, too, perceived the new trends and during the period Bogart filled in for him, developed a new approach to his writing that cleared most (but not all) of the wood-pulp from his prose. He had always said that the writing style he used on *Doc Savage* was one he developed specially for that series, and, beginning with the hardcover novels, he shook free of that style, which had become second nature by now. And, with *Danger Lies East* (3/47), he wrote the first of the new, "slick" Doc novels. He also wrote *Smith is Dead* during this time and when the first slick issues of *Doc Savage* and *Shadow Mystery* hit the stands early in 1947 he was represented in both with *Smith in Shadow Mystery* and *Danger in Doc Savage*.

Under Mrs. Rosmond neither magazine did

very well, despite her modifications, and both became bi-monthlies in 1947. As a result, Lester Dent did some more outside work. He dusted off his *Black Mask* character, Oscar Sail, re-christened him Cap'n Most, and wrote a new hard-cover, *Lady Afraid*, around him in 1948. Oddly, Dent reverted to juvenile writing at the same time with a series of boy's books he wrote for Grosset & Dunlap under the name John Baine between 1947 to 1958. The *Rick Brant Electronic Adventure Series* has never before been linked with Dent, but he is clearly the author of this series about a boy inventor. He seems to have written all of the novels from #1 *The Rocket's Shadow* to #15 *The Blue Ghost Mystery*, whereupon a Hal Goodwin reportedly took over the series.

**D**URING the latter months of 1947, Babette Rosmond took a leave of absence. She wrote adult novels on the side and had a child during this period. Shortly after her return to S&S early in 1948, she quit altogether to pursue her literary career. Formally, she had written for *Unknown* in 1943, and she later became story editor for *Seventeen Magazine*.

William de Grouche assumed full editorial control at this point and immediately reversed Mrs. Rosmond's policies. He reinstituted the old-style *Shadow* novels and persuaded Walter Gibson to return. On the other hand, as Lester Dent seemed to prefer the modern version of *Doc Savage*, de Grouche allowed him to continue in that vein.

De Grouche's term was short, a stop-gap measure while a new editor was being sought. The new editor turned out to be another woman, Daisy Bacon, who had in 1929 turned *Street & Smith's Love Story* into a phenomenal success. Currently, she was editing *Detective Story*. Miss Bacon saw that both magazines were in trouble and radically restructured them. They were returned to pulp size (she called it the "pre War size") with George Rozen covers and ragged edges --but as quarterlies.

She told Walter Gibson to simply go ahead and write them as he'd always done. He did and produced four 60,000-word novels. But with Lester Dent, it was different: Daisy Bacon wanted the old *Doc Savage* back, but Dent didn't want to revert to adventure/science fiction. They compromised and Dent wrote but three novels, each a painfully short 30,000 words--shorter even than the 40,000-word digest novels.

Beyond his dislike for the regression in format, Dent may have turned in these extremely short efforts because he was fuming over the business of the Fall, 1948 issue of *Doc Savage*.

It seems there wasn't one.

Although the last digest issues of both *Doc*

*Savage* and *The Shadow* were published concurrently, there was a curious gap in the issuance of *Doc Savage*. While there was a Fall, 1948 issue of *The Shadow*, there was no companion issue of *Doc Savage*.

**W**HILE William de Grouche was still editor, in April-May, 1948, Lester Dent penned a *Doc Savage* novel titled

*In Hell, Madonna*, and duly submitted it to de Grouche. Shortly afterward, Daisy Bacon entered the picture and, seasoned pulp editor that she was, saw no future for the abstract semi-slicks created by Mrs. Rosmond. Unfortunately, her new vision for *Doc Savage* held no room for the polished *In Hell, Madonna*. Apparently, there was no time for Lester Dent to write a substitute story--or perhaps he balked at the idea long enough, in the hope she'd have to publish the novel in order to stay on schedule.

But she didn't. Instead, she outfoxed Dent. When she put both magazines on a quarterly schedule, she did this with the last digest issue of *Doc Savage*, *Science Detective*, rather than with what would have been the first pulp issue, Fall, 1948, as she did with *The Shadow*. It had to have been one of the slickest bits of publishing sleight-of-hand ever attempted. The differential was such that regular readers never batted an eye and *In Hell, Madonna* went on the shelf and from there into literary limbo.

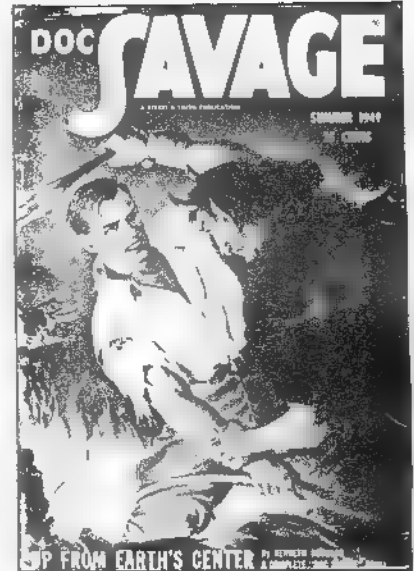
As far as can be determined, the only evidence that the novel ever existed is a manuscript tracer card unearthed in the Street & Smith files. The only clue to its nature lies in the cryptic title, which was abstracted from a line in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*.

*Clown:* Good madonna, why mournest thou?

*Olivia:* Good fool, for my brother's death.

*Clown:* I think his soul is in hell, madonna.

*Olivia:* I know his soul is in heaven, fool.





*Clown:* The more fool, madonna, to mourn  
for your brother's soul being in heaven.

If literary research were somehow akin to genetic engineering, wherein an exact replica of an organism can be reproduced from one of its cells, we might be able to clone *In Hell*, *Madonna* from the title alone. Wishful thinking, true, but for now we can only hope that a copy of the manuscript someday emerges from that limbo to which it was consigned nearly thirty years ago.

**D**AISY BACON stood at the helm of *Doc Savage* for nearly a year. Her intentions were good, but her timing was bad. The pulp industry had been in trouble since the depression and had declined sharply since World War 2. The only pulps which would survive the Fifties would be those that went to digest size, a move Street & Smith had anticipated in 1944. Unfortunately, Daisy Bacon was sailing against the wind, but in retrospect, we can be grateful to her for resurrecting *The Shadow* and *Doc Savage* of days past, as it enabled both magazines to leave this world as they had entered it--as colorful, ragged-edged pulps under their original titles.

When the end did come, it was as if a sword had fallen. In 1949, the last of the Street & Smith heirs, Gerald Smith, became president of the firm. The sword-wielder is unknown; it may have been Smith or Chairman of the Board, Allen L. Grammer. In any case, it was the latter who announced in April of that year that Street & Smith was dropping *Detective Story*, *Western Story*, *Doc Savage* and *The Shadow*--leaving *Astounding Science Fiction* the sole survivor of a long line of pulps. Citing television and the fact that readers were tired of the pulp format, Grammer said the company was shifting toward the women's market. As Street & Smith was the oldest and most well-respected pulp publisher in the nation, the move made headlines.

The next year, Henry W. Ralston, who had created and guided *Doc Savage* and others since their inception, retired--and Street & Smith, though 95 years old in 1949, wouldn't survive another decade.

And the mythical "Kenneth Robeson" was retired forever.

**A**S for the true Kenneth Robeson, Lester Dent, he had suffered a heart attack during this time. He had already completed the final *Doc Savage* novel, *Up From Earth's Center*, and was recuperating in the hospital when Daisy Bacon thoughtlessly wired him the cancellation notice. Dent shrugged the news off

with a wry, characteristic comment to the effect that at least Miss Bacon had waited until he was lying down before sending word.

It may have only been a coincidence that Dent sent *Doc Savage* in a traditional descent into hell in that last story, but a more fitting finale to the series could hardly have been done.

Though Lester Dent recovered in due course, he wrote less frequently after that time due to his business interests and, in part, to a buzz-saw accident in which he lost portions of two fingers. In 1958 he managed, finally, to fulfill his dream of having a story printed under his own name in a national magazine when "Savage Challenge" was published in the *Saturday Evening Post*. He also acquired an interest in politics and was giving thought to running for Congress in Missouri.

But before he could implement his plans, he decided to make another try at treasure hunting and 1959 found him again off the familiar waters of Florida. There, on the spot where treasure was later found by others, he suffered his second heart attack. He was flown to a Kirksville, Missouri hospital where he died on March 11, 1959.

**T**HE great irony of history is that a full and complete picture of any series of events is almost never realized without the passage of time and the passing of the principals involved. So it is here. Nearly thirty years have passed since the cancellation of *Doc Savage* and about forty years since the heyday of the Secret Kenneth Robesons, and only now do we have a solid structure where only rude sticks had stood before.

But for most of the men who wrote *Doc Savage*, this comes too late. Though, thankfully, Ryerson Johnson is still with us (as is Alan Hathway), Lester Dent, Laurence Donovan and Harold A. Davis are not. And the whereabouts of William G. Bogart are unknown. Were all of these men living, they would be the recipients of more attention from their readers than they would have gotten had their work in the *Doc Savage* series been published under their own names during their own lifetimes. For time and nostalgia has added a lustre to the pulps, and a perspective that enables us to fully appreciate them where we took them for granted before.

So let this be a tribute to them, then. The finest tribute to *Doc Savage* and the men who wrote for that magazine possible--the truth. It may be that in distant places, the men who were Kenneth Robeson know. And alive or dead, for one reason or another, they are smiling.

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## Addenda

THE *Duende* Doc Savage Index, which follows, marks the first time that the Doc Savage novels have been compiled and dated in their written order with the true author's names--where known--properly attached to each novel. This index owes much (through the courtesy of Paul Bonner, Jr. of Conde Nast) to the data contained in the Street & Smith files. However, it goes beyond those files with the attributing of certain novels to W. Ryerson Johnson, Harold A. Davis and William G. Bogart. In those cases where Lester Dent sub-contracted novels, Dent's own name is included as co-author. This may indicate that he supplied the original concept, plot outline, revised the manuscript -or all three. It is assumed that he had some hand in all novels not contracted from other writers by Street & Smith itself.

As these author attributions are based upon textual analysis by Will Murray, the latter assumes all responsibility for any errors.

This index also includes the *original* titles to the Doc Savage novels. According to John Nanovic, he often retitled the scripts if a better title came to mind. However, sometimes the author would come up with a new title after submission and request a change. When Nanovic himself made the change, he often included the original title within the page 1 blurb as a gesture to the author.

Other times, more practical considerations dictated a change: *The Wizard* became *The Golden Man* to avoid conflict with the just-launched magazine, also called *The Wizard*. When *The Green Cloud* was submitted so soon after *The Green Death*, it was decided that the titles were too similar, and so everything green became yellow in the script, resulting in this line: "The cloud," Renny said, "is as yellow as a pond frog."

Beyond submission titles, there were the working titles, most of which have been lost. Lester Dent chose the titles to Ryerson Johnson's first two novels from the following lists, prepared by the latter:

<i>The Land of Always Night</i>	<i>Fantastic Island</i>
<i>The Always Night Land</i>	<i>The Mad Monster</i>
<i>The Malevolent Ool</i>	<i>Dungeon of Death</i>
<i>The Machiavellian Ool</i>	<i>Isle of Evil</i>
<i>Creatures Under the Earth</i>	<i>Isle of Dread</i>
<i>Hidden World of Ice</i>	<i>Island of Dreadful</i>
<i>Four Eye Magic</i>	<i>Night</i>
<i>Cold Caverns of Doom</i>	

NOT included in the index are the Doc Savage radio scripts submitted by Lester Dent in 1934. As far as is known, Dent wrote the

following untitled scripts:

Scripts #11 15	March 30, 1934
Scripts #16-20	April 27, 1934
Scripts #21 23	May 15, 1934

Little more is known of this series, which was broadcast nation-wide from September, 1934 to March, 1935. It's possible that Dent wrote the first ten scripts as well.

Also not included is the title of what *may* have been an undeveloped Doc Savage novel. It was rumored that there existed the outline to a post-*Up From Earth's Center* novel titled *The Ice Genius*, which Dent may have been working on before *Doc Savage* was cancelled. While the title sounds authentic, the rumor remains unsubstantiated to this day.

While the submission sequence is an accurate indication of the time of composition of each novel, it is not perfect. Often, more than one novel was in progress at once and, as in the case of the revised novels, they may exist in two separate drafts, written months apart. Dent also seems to have kept an extra script on hand for emergencies. *The King Maker* is a demonstrable example of this: Although submitted in January, 1934, there is strong internal evidence for it having been written prior to *The Phantom City* (probably in July, 1933) and updated.

Finally, with the publication of the *Duende* Doc Savage Index, it would appear that all the authors involved in this series are now known. This may be true, but it is unprovable.

As discussed earlier, Norman Daniels' might have been involved in *Devil on the Moon*. By the same token, the novel *Repel* (#54 10/37), while in Lester Dent's style, contains a number of curious schisms in plot and lapses in continuity, as one would expect in a novel he revised. The evidence for ghosting is very strong in this novel, but there doesn't seem to be enough textual clues to finally determine authorship, but a careless draft or editorial tampering *might* account for the internal flaws, and as *The Motion Menace* attests, Lester Dent was capable of revising a novel so thoroughly as to entirely mask original authorship.

Whatever the truth behind *Repel* may be, it should be noted that what few shreds exist to support a ghost writer, seem to indicate the work of Harold A. Davis.

Owing to the above complexities, if there should be any more ghosts lurking in the pages of *Doc Savage Magazine*, they will probably remain undiscovered, unless some hitherto unknown Kenneth Robeson steps forth to claim his due.

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# THE DUENDE <sup>POC</sup> SAVAGE INDEX

PUBLISHED TITLE	SUBMITTED	ORIGINAL TITLE	PUBLISHED	AUTHOR
1 THE MAN OF BRONZE	12/23/32		3/33	LESTER DENT
2 THE LAND OF TERROR	1/20/33		4/33	LESTER DENT
3 QUEST OF THE SPIDER	2/3/33	THE QUEST OF THE SPIDER	5/33	LESTER DENT
4 THE POLAR TREASURE	2/17/33		6/33	LESTER DENT
5 PIRATE OF THE PACIFIC	3/10/33		7/33	LESTER DENT
6 THE RED SKULL	4/21/33	RED SKULL	8/33	LESTER DENT
7 THE LOST OASIS	5/12/33		9/33	LESTER DENT
8 THE SARGASSO OGRE	5/26/33		10/33	LESTER DENT
9 THE CZAR OF FEAR	6/16/33		11/33	LESTER DENT
10 THE PHANTOM CITY	8/4/33		12/33	LESTER DENT
11 BRAND OF THE WEREWOLF	9/15/33	CREW OF SKELETONS	1/34	LESTER DENT
12 THE MAN WHO SHOOK THE EARTH	9/29/33		2/34	LESTER DENT
13 METEOR MENACE	10/20/33		3/34	LESTER DENT
14 THE MONSTERS	11/17/33		4/34	LESTER DENT
15 MYSTERY ON THE SNOW	12/15/33	THE MYSTERY IN THE SNOW	5/34	LESTER DENT
16 THE KING MAKER	1/12/34		6/34	LESTER DENT
17 THE THOUSAND-HEADED MAN	2/9/34		7/34	LESTER DENT
18 THE SQUEAKING GOBLIN	3/23/34		8/34	LESTER DENT
19 FEAR CAY	4/20/34		9/34	LESTER DENT
20 DEATH IN SILVER	5/25/34		10/34	LESTER DENT
21 THE SEA MAGICIAN	6/15/34		11/34	LESTER DENT
22 THE ANNIHILIST	7/20/34	THE CRIME ANNIHILIST	12/34	LESTER DENT
23 THE MYSTIC MULLAW	8/17/34		1/35	LESTER DENT
24 RED SNOW	9/14/34		2/35	LESTER DENT
25 LAND OF ALWAYS-NIGHT	10/11/34	THE ALWAYS-NIGHT LAND	3/35	W. RYERSON JOHNSON/DENT
26 THE SPOOK LEGION	11/4/34		4/35	LESTER DENT
27 THE SECRET IN THE SKY	12/20/34		5/35	LESTER DENT
28 SPOOK HOLE	2/1/35		6/35	LESTER DENT
29 THE ROAR DEVIL	3/8/35		7/35	LESTER DENT
30 THE QUEST OF QUI	3/22/35	QUEST OF QUI	8/35	LAURENCE DONOVAN
31 COLD DEATH	4/5-4/26/35		9/35	LESTER DENT
32 THE MAJII	5/3/35	GENIE	9/35	LESTER DENT
33 MYSTERY UNDER THE SEA	5/24/35	THE MYSTERY UNDER THE SEA	2/36	LESTER DENT
34 MURDER MELODY	5/24/35	DEATH MUSIC	11/35	LAURENCE DONOVAN
35 THE FANTASTIC ISLAND	5/31/35		12/35	W. RYERSON JOHNSON/DENT
36 DUST OF DEATH	6/14/35		10/35	LESTER DENT
37 THE SEVEN AGATE DEVILS	6/28/35	SEVEN AGATE DEVILS	5/36	LESTER DENT
38 MURDER MIRAGE	6/28/35		11/36	LAURENCE DONOVAN
39 THE MIDAS MAN	7/19/35		8/36	LESTER DENT
40 THE BLACK SPOT	7/19/35		7/36	LAURENCE DONOVAN
41 THE MEN WHO SMILED NO MORE	8/9/35	FROZEN BRAINS	4/36	LAURENCE DONOVAN
42 THE METAL MASTER	8/23/35		3/36	LESTER DENT
43 HAUNTED OCEAN	9/13/35		6/36	LAURENCE DONOVAN
44 THE SOUTH POLE TERROR	10/4/35		10/36	LESTER DENT
45 LAND OF LONG JUJU	10/11/35		1/37	LAURENCE DONOVAN
46 THE VANISHER	11/1/35		12/36	LESTER DENT
47 MAD EYES	11/1/35		5/37	LAURENCE DONOVAN
48 HE COULD STOP THE WORLD	12/6/35		7/37	LAURENCE DONOVAN
49 THE TERROR IN THE NAVY	12/13/35		4/37	LESTER DENT
50 THE DERRICK DEVIL	12/27/35		2/37	LESTER DENT
51 THE MENTAL WIZARD	2/21/36		3/37	HAROLD A. DAVIS/DENT
52 THE LAND OF FEAR	2/21/36		6/37	HAROLD A. DAVIS/DENT
53 RESURRECTION DAY	3/20/36		11/36	LESTER DENT
COLD DEATH (Revision)	3/27/36		9/36	LAURENCE DONOVAN
54 REPEL*	5/22/36		10/37	LESTER DENT
55 THE MOTION MENACE	6/12/36		5/38	W. RYERSON JOHNSON/DENT

\* REPRINTED BY BANTAM AS THE DEADLY DWARF.

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56 OST	7/3/36		8/37 LESTER DENT
57 THE SEA ANGEL	7/31/36		11/37 LESTER DENT
58 <u>DEVIL ON THE MOON</u>	2/15/37	THE DEVIL ON THE MOON	3/38 LESTER DENT
59 THE GOLDEN PERIL	3/12/37		12/37 HAROLD A DAVIS/DENT
60 THE FEATHERED OCTOPUS	3/26/37		4/37 LESTER DENT
61 THE LIVING FIRE MENACE	6/4/37		1/38 HAROLD DAVIS/DENT
62 THE MOUNTAIN MONSTER	9/10/37		2/38 HAROLD DAVIS/DENT
63 THE PIRATE'S GHOST	9/17/37		4/38 LESTER DENT
64 THE RED TERRORS	10/22/37	THE TERROR UNDER THE SEA*	9/38 LESTER DENT
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66 THE GIGGLING GHOSTS	2/11/38		7/38 LESTER DENT
67 THE MUNITIONS MASTER	2/11/38		8/38 HAROLD DAVIS/DENT
68 PORTRESS OF SOLITUDE	3/25/38	THE PORTRESS OF SOLITUDE	10/38 LESTER DENT
69 THE DEVIL GENGHIS	4/1/38		12/38 LESTER DENT
70 THE GREEN DEATH	4/1/38		11/38 HAROLD DAVIS/DENT
71 MAD MESA	6/23/38		1/39 LESTER DENT
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73 MERCHANTS OF DISASTER	8/17/38		7/39 HAROLD DAVIS/DENT
74 THE FRECKLED SHARK	10/3/38		3/39 LESTER DENT
75 WORLD'S FAIR GOBLIN	10/11/38	GOBLIN! GOBLIN!***	4/39 WILLIAM BOGART/DENT
76 THE GOLD OGRE	12/1/38		5/39 LESTER DENT
77 THE FLAMING FALCONS	1/24/39		6/39 LESTER DENT
78 THE CRIMSON SERPENT	1/30/39		8/39 HAROLD DAVIS/DENT
79 HEX	1/30/39		11/39 WILLIAM BOGART/DENT
80 POISON ISLAND	3/27/39		9/39 LESTER DENT
81 THE STONE MAN	4/21/39		10/39 LESTER DENT
82 THE ANGRY GHOST	6/5/39		2/40 WILLIAM BOGART/DENT
83 THE DAGGER IN THE SKY	6/28/39		12/39 LESTER DENT
84 THE OTHER WORLD	8/7/39		1/40 LESTER DENT
85 THE SPOTTED MEN	9/25/39	THE DEATH FORMULA	3/40 WILLIAM BOGART/DENT
86 THE EVIL GNOME	10/26/39	THE MAN NOBODY COULD SEE	4/40 LESTER DENT
87 THE BOSS OF TERROR	11/27/39		5/40 LESTER DENT
88 THE FLYING GOBLIN	12/4/39		7/40 WILLIAM BOGART/DENT
89 <u>THE PURPLE DRAGON</u>	1/23/40		9/40 HAROLD DAVIS/DENT
90 TUNNEL TERROR	1/25/40	HELL AND HARD ROCK	8/40 WILLIAM BOGART/DENT
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92 THE HEADLESS MEN	2/6/40		6/41 ALAN HATHWAY /
93 THE AWFUL DYNASTY	2/28/40		11/40 WILLIAM BOGART/DENT
94 DEVILS OF THE DEEP	4/10/40		10/40 HAROLD DAVIS/DENT
95 THE MEN VANISHED	4/15/40		12/40 LESTER DENT
96 THE DEVIL'S PLAYGROUND	5/8/40		1/41 ALAN HATHWAY
97 BEQUEST OF EVIL	5/27/40	THE DEVIL'S BEQUEST	2/41 WILLIAM BOGART/DENT
98 THE ALL-WHITE CLIF	6/13/40		3/41 LESTER DENT
99 THE GOLDEN MAN	7/19/40	THE WIZARD	4/41 LESTER DENT
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102 THE MINDLESS MONSTERS	9/9/40		9/41 ALAN HATHWAY
103 THE RUSTING DEATH	10/1/40		1/42 ALAN HATHWAY
104 THE GREEN EAGLE	10/8/40		7/41 LESTER DENT
105 MYSTERY ISLAND	12/26/40	THE ICE AGE	8/41 LESTER DENT
106 BIRDS OF DEATH	3/6/41	THOSE GOLDEN BIRDS	10/41 LESTER DENT
107 PERIL IN THE NORTH	4/14/41	MAN AFRAP	12/41 LESTER DENT
108 THE INVISIBLE-BOX MURDERS	5/7/41	THE INVISIBLE BOX	11/41 LESTER DENT
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111 THE TOO-WISE OWL	9/6/41		3/42 LESTER DENT
112 PIRATE ISLE	10/24/41	THE BLUE JINX	5/42 LESTER DENT
113 THE SPEAKING STONE	12/15/41		6/42 LESTER DENT

\*THIS NOVEL IS A SEQUEL TO MYSTERY UNDER THE SEA, THUS THE SIMILARITY OF TITLES.

\*\* IN SPANISH, THIS WOULD BE RENDERED AS: DUENDE! DUENDE!



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120 THE TALKING DEVIL	7/2/42	THE SPEAKING SATAN	5/43 LESTER DENT
121 WAVES OF DEATH	8/19/42	DEATH IN A PLASH	2/43 LESTER DENT
122 THE KING OF TERROR	9/21/42	HIS MAJESTY, KING TERROR	4/43 LESTER DENT
123 THE BLACK, BLACK WITCH	10/21/42		3/43 LESTER DENT
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132 ACCORDING TO PLAN OF A ONE-EYED MYSTIC ...	7/26/43	THE ONE-EYED MYSTIC	1/44 LESTER DENT
133 DEATH HAD YELLOW EYES	9/7/43		2/44 LESTER DENT
134 THE DERELICT OF SKULL SHOAL	10/21/43	SKULL SHOAL	3/44 LESTER DENT
135 THE THREE DEVILS	11/22/43		5/44 LESTER DENT
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139 WEIRD VALLEY	2/17/44		9/44 LESTER DENT
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144 STRANGE FISH	7/27/44	THE FISH WAS STRANGE	2/45 LESTER DENT
145 THE TEN TON SNAKES	8/28/44	JUNGLE STRANGE	3/45 LESTER DENT
146 CARGO UNKNOWN	9/26/44	30 FATHOMS TO HELL	4/45 LESTER DENT
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152 THE THING THAT PURSUED	3/30/45	MR. CALAMITY	10/45 LESTER DENT
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164 DEATH IN LITTLE HOUSES	3/21/46	THE MYSTERY OF THE LITTLE HOUSES	10/46 WILLIAM BOGART/DENT
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170 NO LIGHT TO DIE BY	11/6/46		5/47 LESTER DENT
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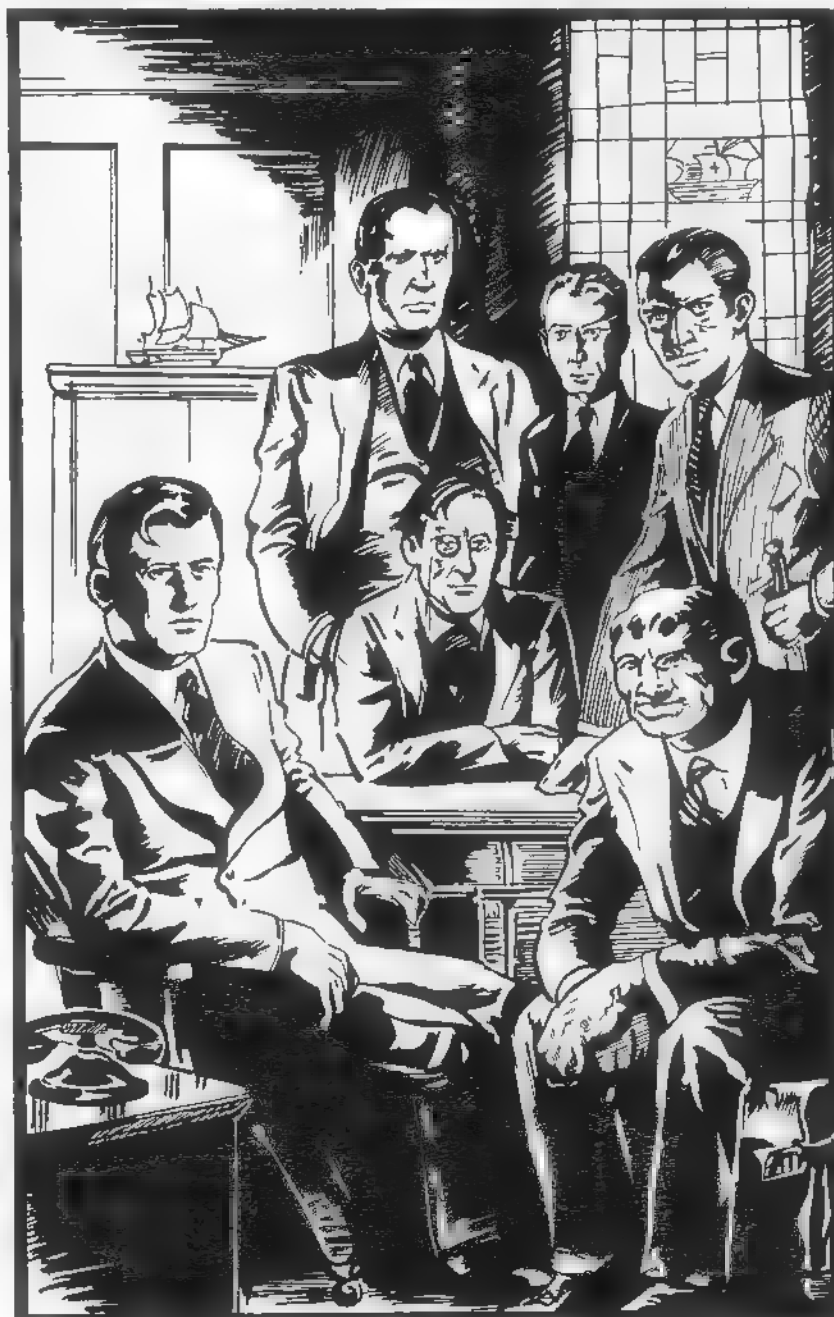
\*MR. DENT MUST HAVE BEEN FOND OF THIS TITLE; REFER TO #149.

\*\*DENT'S ORIGINAL TITLE - BOGART'S PRIOR TITLE SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN "TARGET FOR DEATH", LATER USED FOR #167.

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179 IN HELL, MADONNA	5/3/48 (UNPUBLISHED; INTENDED FOR FALL, 48)	LESTER DENT
180 THE GREEN MASTER	7/1/48	WINTER, 49 LESTER DENT
181 RETURN FROM CORMORAL	11/15/48 MIRACLE BY WILLIAMS	SPRING, 49 LESTER DENT
182 UP FROM EARTH'S CENTER	1/31/49 THE DEVILISH MR. WAIL	SUMMER, 49 LESTER DENT

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1975

# Out of the Shadows-

## Walter Gibson



### Introduction:

WALTER GIBSON does not look like a legend. He projects, rather, the image of a prosperous and lately retired banker who, after a long career, is at leisure and looking forward to spending some time with his grandchildren. He is a bit rotund; his hair is a crisp, unshadowed white; his voice is deep and slightly hoarse; and, though 79, he is strikingly vital. At his 79, in any way, they are never still. These are the hands of a man whose entire life has been a series of adventures and will not rest. The same hands that used to emerge bloodied after a day-long stint at the typewriter, now emerge to perform the same old, same old, dazzling feats of magic. The truth is that Walter Gibson is more than a legend. He is a legend who, in turn, has created a legend--the legend of The Shadow.

As with so many legends, Walter B. Gibson is something of a mystery. While many of his accomplishments are well known, much of his life and background are as dark as The Shadow's hat. He is a man who has enjoyed the friendships of some of the signal magicians of this century, men like Houdini, Thurston, Dunninger and Blackstone. But few know that he, himself, is considered one of the greatest sleight-of-hand artists living, and was once a carnival magician. While it's a fact that in his pre-Shadow days, he was a reporter for the *Philadelphia North American*, his radio work is almost unknown. In addition to plotting the "Nick Carter" radio series, he wrote and narrated the "Strange" sequence as well. It's no secret that he scripted Street & Smith's *Shadow Comics*, but how many are aware that his was the brain behind *Super-Magician*, *Ghost Breakers*, *Space Western* and the "Chip Gardner" stories in *Crime Does Not Pay*? As the Maxwell Grant of *The Shadow*, he is famous, but the Norgil the Magician stories he wrote under that name are long-forgotten. Nor does anyone remember the short-lived pulp, *Fantastic Science Fiction*, which he edited. Not to mention the uncounted books he's authored on subjects as diverse as

magic, crime and even pinochle! Walter Gibson has written so much, on so many subjects, that if he isn't the most prolific author of all time, he's easily the most versatile.

Legends have been built upon much less than this.

BUT, incredible as all that may seem, Walter Gibson's reputation derives largely from what is only a fraction of his total output--his Shadow novels. It's ironic that the mysterious figure of The Shadow has since become the symbol for both the pulp era and the heyday of radio drama, while Walter Gibson, hidden behind the Maxwell Grant name, is only now becoming publicly associated with the character he created more than forty years ago.

Happily, he is now being accorded proper recognition. With the current success of Pyramid's Shadow reprints, Walter Gibson has emerged--out of the shadows, one might say--to receive his just due. In the past year, he has been interviewed for countless magazines, newspapers and radio shows, and on July 5, 1975, he made what was undoubtedly his first public appearance as the creator of The Shadow at the 1975 Comic Art Convention held in New York's Commodore Hotel.

There, Mr. Gibson spoke on a panel, signed autographs and related innumerable anecdotes. Duende was there, in the person of Will Murray as was (to our surprise and enjoyment) artist Frank Hamilton, whose interpretation of The Shadow Mr. Gibson considers the best since the days of the original *Shadow Magazine*. We found Mr. Gibson to be an unusually considerate and agreeable person and he kindly consented to an interview. What follows is the end product of that exchange, impeccably adorned by Frank Hamilton. We believe it to be the longest interview of this kind ever published. It contains much new information on The Shadow but, more than that, we feel it captures the personality and spirit of an amazing gentleman and author--Walter B. Gibson.

--Will Murray



Duende: I want you to tell me about one of the turning points of the whole Shadow series: when Kent Allard was introduced for the first time as Kent Allard in *The Shadow Unmasks*. You'd been building up suspense for about six years. Whose decision was it to completely reveal The Shadow?

Mr. Gibson: The thing about the Shadow stories was this. that we were continually trying to keep ahead of the reader. I would talk with Nanovic, the editor, and I would make suggestions of different things that would make the stories more progressive. Well, we always decided that, at a certain time, we would have The Shadow reveal his true identity.

Now, at one time, we had the anniversary issue. I forget whether that came first or not. The tenth anniversary issue; we had ten Shadows on the cover. (*The Shadow Unmasks* (8/1/37) was published first; the tenth anniversary issue was *The Time Master* (4/1/41)--Will) We were always thinking eye-conscious. This idea, *The Shadow Unmasks*, had an excellent cover. It was done almost in comic style, with four panels on the cover. We figured that would arouse interest. So we suddenly revealed this business of The Shadow coming down in Mexico and so forth.

They followed that through a bit; they didn't use him much as Allard, just occasionally. But the story that immediately followed that --which many people have overlooked-- was one called *The Yellow Band*. (8/15/37)

Now in that, Allard immediately teamed up with Cranston in Miami and got Cranston to work with him. And that really knocked people for a loop because they were seeing Cranston in two places at once! See, all these things we turned to advantage. As soon as we began talking about "Let's have him unmask," I began to create the idea and then I came in, "When he does, we'll do this... And when we get to the next one, we'll..." So then we were all set for him and also set for the follow-up. (Actually, Mr. Gibson's otherwise-phenomenal memory has tricked him. In *The Yellow Band* (8/15/37) the real Lamont Cranston does not meet Kent Allard. What happened was that Kent Allard was framed for murder and had to revert back to the Cranston pose in order to clear himself. So *The Shadow* played all three roles without help here--Will)

*The Yellow Band*, incidentally, was my idea. *The Reader's Digest* and such people had been putting a paper band around the magazine with a statement that read: "Read such and such a thing in this issue." Well, I went into Street & Smith one day and said, "I got a good idea for you."

"What's that?"

"You know those bands? We could do that with *The Shadow*."

"Yes, but we've checked it and it costs so much for those slips."

I said: "Not the way I'm going to do it. We just put a yellow band across it as part of the cover and it looks like it's got a band around, but it isn't." And I said, "We want to put a band right across the middle; print it right onto the back and everything, so that it looks like it's around the thing. When they see it, they see this just like the other thing."

"Great!" they said.

I said. "It's got to be yellow because the name of the story is going to be *The Yellow Band*." And so it said, "Read the adventure of the Yellow Band" and that was printed on the yellow band. It worked out very well.

Duende: Throughout that story you had various kinds of yellow bands: a rubber band; a hat-band; a cigar band. That was characteristic of the Street & Smith pulps; they didn't just go in for a clever story, but the covers were often very well designed to go with them.

Mr. Gibson: Oh, yes. We had a lot of very good things like that. You really couldn't go on with a job like that unless you liked it and were doing it properly--I mean getting the co-operation. That's why I hated to get involved with various other things. I remember talking with Ed Burkholder. (*S&S staff writer--Will*) He and I had an apartment together, down in the Village for a couple of years. That's the apartment that's supposed to be haunted now, 12 Gay St. Hans Holzer said it's haunted. People see a man in evening clothes moving in and out. But that was where I wrote the last Shadow. And what they're seeing is Lamont Cranston. They're seeing what we call an after-image psychic projection, not a ghost. (It must have been the heat of the moment, coupled with the many questions I was trying to ask Mr. Gibson, but this aside went right past me without registering. However, Hans Holzer's Yankee Ghosts provided me with further information. The house in question is re-



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putedly haunted by an apparition which seems to answer to the description of Lamont Cranston: "I saw the ghost...wearing evening clothes, a cape, hat and his face somewhat obscured by the shadows of the hallway...he was a youngish man and had sparkling eyes." Mr. Gibson, though a believer in psychic phenomena, is reportedly skeptical of ghosts, thus his explanation of the phantom Cranston as an "after-image psychic projection."

In the lore of Tibet, this type of manifestation is called a tulpa. Reputedly, a tulpa is an unintentional by-product of a powerfully-conceived idea. Whether or not this phantom Cranston could be termed a tulpa, by the time that Walter Gibson had written that last Shadow novel, *The Whispering Eyes*, (Summer, 1949) he had put in over 16 nearly-continuous years writing *The Shadow*--certainly ample time to generate a tulpa if the human mind were capable of such a feat. Even Lester Dent is supposed to have claimed that he actually saw his characters walking around after a particularly intense period of writing. Who knows?--Will)

Duende: Tell me about that last novel. Were you aware when you wrote that, that it was to be the final novel?

Mr. Gibson: Daisy Bacon became editor. Daisy was a real good editor; she had done a lot of reading of various detective stories, was a good buff on Sherlock Holmes and everything. And she just said, "Go ahead and write them," and I did. So, she went and got Rozen back and he did the covers. I did four of them. And I said, "Gee, this kind of a deal, in this form should get--if they push it right and arouse interest, we'd be right back on a monthly."

Duende: Speaking of Rozen, who was...?

Mr. Gibson: They just decided to quit pulps. You mean about Rozen?

Duende: Yeah. There's some confusion about Rozen. There was a George Rozen and a Jerome Rozen; who did the covers during the Thirties? Did they alternate?

Mr. Gibson: No, no. I think just one did it. (turning to Jim Steranko, who was near) Didn't just one do *The Shadow*?

Steranko: George did all the *Shadows*; Jerome never did. The interesting thing is, they were twins.

Mr. Gibson: Oh, they were, huh?

Steranko: Yeah. They were twins and I was just talking to Walter about who he felt was the definitive *Shadow* artist and we're in agreement that George Rozen was *the Shadow* artist.

Mr. Gibson: Oh, yes.

Steranko: He created the visual imagery that, you know, went into all of them.

Mr. Gibson: Yes, very close to it.

(This corrects my statement in last issue's

*Graves Gladney* interview that Jerome Rozen did the covers during the Thirties. I spoke with Jim Steranko more recently and he reaffirmed this, citing Jerome Rozen's own statement to that effect. George Rozen died a couple of years ago.--Will)

Mr. Gibson: Gladney did some nice covers and they were in the *Shadow* tradition. He followed. He got some unusual--Gladney was good on long-range scenes. He had that one big picture of a lighthouse.

Duende: With *The Shadow* in the corner?

Mr. Gibson: Yeah.

Duende: That was *Shadow Over Alcatraz*.

Mr. Gibson: Oh, right.

Duende: Getting back to Kent Allard for a minute: For about a year, you had Kent Allard appear very frequently and Cranston only once or twice. It looked as if you were phasing Cranston out and, in 1940, you phased Henry Arnaud out; and Allard appeared, maybe, only a very few times in the Forties. Why is this?

Mr. Gibson: Well, that had a lot to do with the thing that I mentioned in the introduction to this Crime Club book. (*The reprint Murder by Magic & Mask of Mephisto volume--Will*) As soon as the War hit, I couldn't have any of those fantastic spy rings or anything because they were in reality. And we went into whodunits. Whodunits were fitted perfectly for Cranston around the Cobalt Club and having some peculiar crime in New York. And we wanted to use Margo Lane occasionally because of the radio tie-in and she fitted into stories as long as Cranston played that debonair part. And so, he was made to order for that. Also, many people thought of him (as Cranston) unless they read the Allard story. That was one difficulty that got worse and worse as we went along. Somebody would go back and wouldn't know the story. And you'll notice in the early issues, there were a lot of footnotes referring back to all those stories. We never used to do that later, because it was impossible to get some of them. So we just figured that since the people were sold on Cranston, we might as well play along with it.

Duende: Would you have preferred to retain Allard though the Forties in a fairly frequent role?

Mr. Gibson: No, I liked the Cranston thing just as well.

Duende: Did this give it a little more mystery having Kent Allard fade into the background?

Mr. Gibson: As I look back, one of the reasons I got a wallop out of writing *The Shadow*, and I think people liked reading it, was that we were always thinking of some way to utilize the existing devices. So, I had Allard there and when there was a good reason to use him--or to use Cranston and Allard, or any of these things

we would use them. So, they all made sense; though it didn't work for long in *The Shadow*.

Duende: Ah. Why did you phase Henry Arnaud out, and most of the other identities? (Arnaud was in *Reel after Death's* Premium 1/1 42 when *The Shadow* employed that identity in a criminal capacity, thus destroying that "cover."--Will)

Mr. Gibson: Henry Arnaud. Well, you see, in the beginning, he played various forms. He played a man in one of these Bantam novels, *The Death Tower*. (1/35) I had him play a man named Clarendon. And I'm sorry about that in a way, because that was in the early stages; he hadn't been fully defined as Cranston. We just decided Clarendon had done his bit in that thing. So that was it. (The Cranston-like role of George Clarendon was used but twice, in *The Death Tower* and *Hands in the Dark*.--Will)

Duende: And it was the same with Henry Arnaud?

Mr. Gibson: Yeah. Well, Arnaud was a good character. He played that quite a bit. As it progressed, he (meaning *The Shadow*) began to get to know people. For example, Cardona moved up from a detective to an inspector. He got to know Weston. For awhile, there was a substitute for Weston; that was Wainwright Barth. Then Weston came back. Well, as *The Shadow* had more and more of these people and more places he habituated, there was less reason for him to go into these other parts. Maybe not exactly less reason, but we had him favor the part that was best-known to the most readers.

Duende: So, it was a natural progression. Cranston had gotten to the point where he fitted in so well with so many situations, there was no need to bring any other characters in.

Mr. Gibson: Yeah... There's one they missed... Fritz the janitor. You know, there have been some questions about Fritz the janitor to the effect: Why couldn't he (*The Shadow*) have gotten all the stuff himself, or picked it up when Cardona was reporting to Weston, or something of that sort? Why did he have to snoop around as Fritz the janitor? You know, Fritz disappeared very suddenly from the stories.

Duende: (Laughter) Yeah.

Mr. Gibson: You know why?

Duende: No.

Mr. Gibson: Fritz was a member of the Bund. Fritz was spying down on police headquarters. Finally, Fritz got deported back to Germany before the War. That's never been told.

Duende: (Laughter) You heard it here first!

Mr. Gibson: He (*The Shadow*) was doing a double spy job. He was covering this; he was covering the other thing. He was lousing Fritz all up, too! He was taking things that Fritz would have gotten. (Fritz, whose role as police headquarters janitor *The Shadow* often assumed in order to eavesdrop on Inspector Joe Cardona and Commissioner Ralph Weston, vanished around 1940.--Will)

Duende: Tell me about the constant references to *The Shadow's* face. In *The Black Master*, a villain unmasks him and says *The Shadow* has no face, and in two other novels, he's unmasked and there's all sorts of consternation.

Mr. Gibson: That was done primarily to shake up the readers. The best advice on writing stories (I got) was from a man named John T. MacIntyre and I bet most people don't know who he is. But he was a very fine writer. He wrote some very good mysteries; he wrote a series about a detective called Ashton Kirk. It was a popular series in the 1900's. His best-known book was called *Steps Going Down*, which won an international prize and was a best-seller for quite a period there.

Well, I read his books when I was a kid. I was very enamored of them and then I met him. So, he and I got to be good friends; and I was writing



him stuff at the time I started *The Shadow*. He was quite pleased to hear I was knocking these things off. And John says, "Don't get the stories too good! Keep within the patterns, whatever they are, and stay with it. Don't try to get the stories too sophisticated or this or that." Well, I did to a degree, but I felt the readers were growing with it. But I always used to use one angle: Whenever I used unusual words or something, I often sort of modified the sentence so that I explained them as I went along. However, I always kept John's stuff right in mind. Well, I was quoting him from some of the early ones I wrote, and I wrote him that thing about The Shadow and his face. "Whoa! Don't ever do anything like that," he said. "People will pick that thing up and what to know what it's all about," and so forth. And I said: "That's what it's supposed to do." "Well," he said, "You always have trouble back-tracking on things like that." He says, "Watch out!"

But John was over-cautious. Well, sure enough, years later, everybody reads that and wants to know what it was all about. Well, the idea was to stir the reader up. I mean, get the reader wondering. It accomplished this very aim. I had sort of a metaphysical answer for it; which could have been that he had them see something strangely gruesome or weird, that almost hypnotized them. But I never had reason to go into a lot of details about it. I just let it hang a bit.

Duende: I had a theory about it, because on the cover of *The Shadow's Shadow* in which one of these incidents occur, his face is unmasked and the bottom part of his face shows--and there are no lips!

Mr. Gibson: Yeah.

Duende: Do you recall that? I was wondering why that was. I had a theory that during the War his face had been scarred...

Mr. Gibson: Yes, that was more or less hinted at. That he had plastic surgery or something, and if he just took the thing away, it would look very weird, almost skeletonish. But I never went into it because I didn't like to get too much on the gruesome side. But, you remember in many of the things that would tell how he would mold his face?

Duende: Yeah.

Mr. Gibson: Well, I frequently figured he was using a plastic type of thing with which he would mold it and he had a base that he worked on there.



Duende: I'd felt that the plastic surgery would explain why Kent Allard came back. If he'd been injured to the point where he had to use other identities, as Kent Allard he wouldn't look as he did during the War because of the injuries. I theorized that his face had been repaired and then that's why Kent Allard had returned. How do you feel about that idea?

Mr. Gibson: Yes, I had those things in mind. I mean along that trend. But the thing was, it was just one of those things we didn't find any reason to go ahead with. See, one of the points was: It wasn't too long after the War the *The Shadow* started; it was ten years after. There'd been a lot of war aces and things of that sort. So the idea of giving him a past with the things he had done over in Germany and moved around during the War; and that he could have been injured and there's an almost nebulous mystery about him...And see, don't forget, too, that when I finally took Allard, I had other choices. He could have been a lot of other people instead of Allard.

Duende: Such as?

Mr. Gibson: Well, I mean he could still have been a person that was roaming around doing spy

work of that sort.

(Just as Mr. Gibson relates, during the first three years of *The Shadow*, he tantalized the reader with various clues and hints as to *The Shadow's* background. Relative to *The Shadow's* face, there are four novels, each spaced about a year apart, which touch upon this enigma. In the very first novel, *The Living Shadow* (4/31), a minor crook tells of seeing *The Shadow* with his face obscured by a bandage and links him with a famous spy who was wounded in the face over in France during World War 1. He conjectures that: "Maybe *The Shadow* ain't got no face to speak of." (see Chapter 33) In *The Black Master* (3/32, Chapter 20), *The Shadow* is unmasked and the villain exclaims: "The secret of *The Shadow*. At last it is understood! The man of many faces--with no face of his own!" We are not provided with any narrative description of what he sees. This trick is again exploited in *The Shadow's Shadow* (2/1/33, Chapter 27), and *The Black Falcon* (2/1/34, Chapter 22). In the climax of each story, *The Shadow* reveals his face to a particularly vicious criminal, both of whom about collapse from the shock of what they see. In each case, the reader is provided with no clues as to the nature of the horror. However, the cover of *The Shadow's Shadow* does show a profile of the unmasked *Shadow*, and the depiction indicates a lower face that is entirely lipless and dark in color, as if burned or scarred, though the shadow of his collar might account for this dark area. Also, the jaw appears curiously shaped. In any case, after *The Black Falcon*, this device is no longer used and when *The Shadow* is revealed as Kent Allard, WW1 spy and the Dark Eagle, no mention of a face wound is given. Plastic surgery would seem the explanation. That *The Shadow's* face had, in some way, been injured seems undeniable.--Will)

**Duende:** That reminds me, *The Shadow* is garbed in a cloak and slouch hat. This is a very famous figure at the turn of the century--the figure of an anarchist, usually with the hat and the cloak, with the "bowling ball" bomb under the arm. Did you give him that sort of spy outfit because he had been a spy, or did that just come naturally?

**Mr. Gibson:** No; it more or less came naturally. The general idea was so he could fade in the darkness.

**Duende:** Ah. Because he is dressed as what we now think of as an old-fashioned spy. That's a coincidence then, more or less?

**Mr. Gibson:** I needed him in black so as he could fade out and fade off into darker corners, things of that sort. Then the cloak was also a big help when they would surround him or something. In fact, *Dracula* did a gimmick like that in the play, not the movie. I saw the play when

it first came out.

(Those who read our *Graves Gladney* interview last issue will recall that I theorized that the crimson-lined cloak might have been based upon the one worn by Bela Lugosi in the 1931 movie, "*Dracula*." I also speculated that the crimson lining might not have been Mr. Gibson's idea, but an art director's. I'm told that Gibson did not invent the lining, but went along with the idea.--Will)

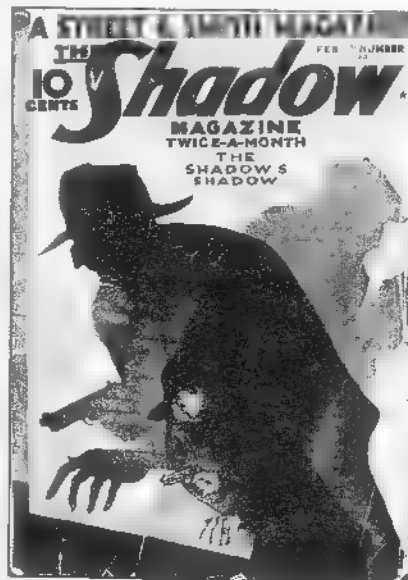
**Bystander:** Is *The Shadow's* invisibility an illusion or a power of the mind?

**Mr. Gibson:** Oh, both. If he wanted to hypnotize somebody so they couldn't see him, he could do that. But whenever he had a chance, he'd just ease away and they'd look and just see this blackness sort of fading out.

**Duende:** Let me ask you a couple of things on a side issue. When Doc Savage was first created, did you have anything to do with the creation of the character?

**Mr. Gibson:** Doc? No, Doc was planned at Street & Smith. They were talking about doing an adventure thing to follow along with *The Shadow*. They were going to start an adventure magazine if they kept *The Shadow* once a month. They would have given me the adventure magazine assignment after I'd got them a year ahead, and they wouldn't need *Shadows* for another year. But their road men took a test on the thing and found to their surprise that the *Shadows* were selling out rapidly during the first two weeks, people were so eager to get it. And the last two weeks sales dwindled very heavily. That is, the big rush was over. So they decided to go twice a month. Well, that meant that they had to have somebody do the monthly and they got Les Dent. And the reason that *Doc Savage* never went twice a month was:

They took surveys on it after the first year and they found that its sales were level. That though the people didn't rush for it, it had constant readers who would pick it up. I think it had more of a hop-skip-and-jump than *The*



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Shadow because with *The Shadow* they were afraid they'd miss something-- some new twist to The Shadow--whereas the Doc Savages were sort of single stories; they didn't interlock like The Shadows. So, a lot of people would forget to buy their *Doc Savage* until the third or fourth week. So they never went twice a month on *Doc Savage*. So Doc's sale was bigger than *The Shadow's*--per issue, but not per month. *Duende*: But you had something to do with *The Avenger*, though. Could you tell us what your input was there?

*Mr. Gibson*: Both Les and I were called in to talk with Paul Ernst. But what they really did, they decided to make a composite of The Shadow and Doc Savage. So they took agents like I had and they used a Doc Savage type of story. So, it was a composite thing; they got Les Dent and myself to give advice to Paul Ernst. Les told him more about how to handle characters; I told him more about how to handle situations, make changes of pace. So our angles with him were largely on technique and on the writing thing, rather than give him any plots because they were cooking the pot with him; they already had plot ideas.

*Duende*: Who created the plots to *The Avenger*?

*Mr. Gibson*: Well, they just took some revised, or changed, quite a lot of the old type of plots and let Ernst come up with others just like we had. You see, there's one thing I didn't get a chance to talk about here: and that was that a lot of the plots could be very simple. They had a way of taking things like *Lorna Doone*, or something, and rehashing them and making a western story out of them.

*(Off mike, someone asks how Ted Tinsley came to write The Shadow.)*

*Mr. Gibson*: Well, I was way up ahead, you see. I was six months ahead and they began worrying about the stories. Everybody began imitating *The Shadow*, and they were thinking the sales were going down. They were up in a tight spot, Ralston and Nanovic. Somebody says, "Can't we change the angle of the stories?" There was a trend coming to have the stories break apart, instead of build up. They would already be built, and it was sort of a different technique. Well, they would have had to stop me at my writing and say, "Change over and give us stories of this particular type." And they wanted some women angles in them, too. There had been all these suggestions that come in. So they decided the best way to do, was not bother me. I was going and they were satisfied with my stories. So I said, "Try some other stories out and inject them." And they were afraid--Ralston was a very smart man--Ralston was afraid that if he stopped me on my output and tried to experiment, he was going to lose what they needed. So they

called in Ted Tinsley. And Ted was a very slow writer, but quite a good writer, very meticulous. So they figured, "Here, let's get this guy and we'll experiment through him." So they gave him a contract for four stories--that was all. Later they made it four a year.

*(To amplify on this: Walter Gibson was a traditional mystery writer, much in the vein*

*of Conan Doyle. Ted Tinsley, however, was a more modern writer and a regular contributor to Black Mask. As a consequence, Tinsley's version of The Shadow is less awesome and more human. The "women angles" were touches of light sex which Tinsley introduced into the series and Mr Gibson also experimented with later. These involved little more than helpless damsels getting their dresses ripped in the story, and were only lightly suggestive. These scenes were often played up by the cover and interior illustrators. Elsewhere, Mr. Gibson has said that Tinsley was hired without his knowledge and, prior to that, he was asked to revise The Salamanders (4/1/36) in progress, to conform to this new trend.--Will,*

*(Off mike, someone asks Mr. Gibson his opinion of the many Shadow imitators and if they weren't "some kind of a rip-off.")*

*Mr. Gibson*: Oh, they were just imitations. I don't know; I never had time to bother with any of those things. Without being egotistical, Babe Ruth--they asked him one time which pitchers bothered him the most. He said, "They all look alike to me." *(laughter)* So all the imitations of The Shadow look alike to me. They were interchangeable; I never paid any attention to them.

*Duende*: That's very good. *(laughter)* The Jimmie Dale novels: You've been quoted as saying they influenced The Shadow. They seem to be a primary source on some levels.

*Mr. Gibson*: They delineated such scenes and things around New York. But that was about it. Oh, Jimmie Dale moved around; he was more of a "Raffles" type. Of course, The Shadow followed almost every possible pattern. Jimmie Dale had

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some good treatments. See, I had to devise a lot of things. If I could ever get into this--talk about the techniques--I developed one technique that I never saw anybody else use, but I got it through necessity. I would start off with a story that was going to be, in a sense, a whodunit. Now, this was early, before I plotted them so deeply. I began to reach a point where I said, "Gee, the reader might be onto this. He's going to know that so-and-so is the villain." So I switched the plot and, all of a sudden, I would make that guy the villain, but breaking loose right there and changing the whole trend of the story.

Duende: The Third Shadow was like that, wasn't it?

Mr. Gibson: Yes, you'll find a lot of that in the early stories. I get quite a kick when I read them, myself.

(The Third Shadow 3/15/36, involved a running battle with a fake Shadow who was unmasked early in the novel. Two-thirds of the way into the story, another fake Shadow is introduced, who kills the imposter. The plot breaks down at this point and the second imposter carries the story forward to its conclusion. Re: Jimmie Dale, alias "the Grey Seal." While The Shadow, himself, does not derive from Frank L. Packard's earlier Street & Smith hero, the underworld in which he operated with its scruffy characters and seedy dens, seems to have been adopted for The Shadow.--Will)

Mr. Gibson: (Referring to a copy of House of Ghosts 9/43, which a fan wanted autographed.) This story, by the way, is unusual.

Duende: Dunninger is in it.

Mr. Gibson: Yeah. You know about what happened with this guy? I did a book for him, just recently. And do you know about my going out to the coast for him?

Fan: No, I don't.

Mr. Gibson: Well, at that time, the Brothers of Magic were going to present him with a plaque for a lifetime devoted to magic at the Magic Castle, and he was going to go out in a wheelchair and get on a plane and go in front of all these people. But he began to get fever, and he couldn't have said anything. I'd spoken for him some other times, so they got in touch with me and said could I come out and accept the plaque for him? So I got there on March 8th--it was the night of March 8th. So I attended the bash at the Magic Castle, accepted the award, and told them a few facts about Dunninger and left early. And he died the next day. I got in one day ahead and I had to pull out of there two days later and come back and officiate at the funeral in New Jersey. So I really had a big weekend there.

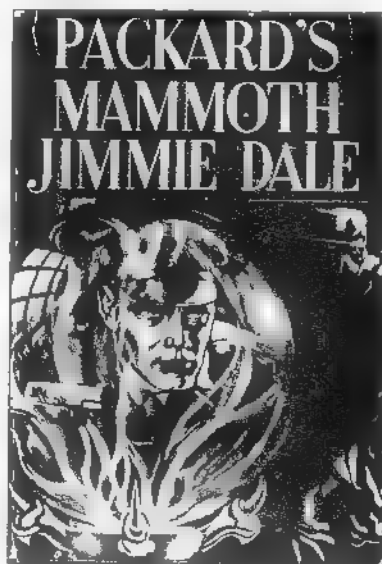
(Fans asks what Dunninger had to do with

the novel.)

Mr. Gibson: He figures as a character. I'd like to reprint that one. He went on some ghost-hunting expeditions and I knew all about those; and I'd done some writing for him, so we put him in.

(At this point, the gathering at Jim Steranko's Shadow display broke up and an entourage consisting of Walter Gibson, Jim Steranko, Frank Hamilton, Will Murray and others repaired to another room where the first annual Shadow Secret Society Meeting was held. There Mr. Gibson related the history of The Shadow's fire opal--which can't be repeated here--and then threw the floor open to questions.--Will)

Mr. Gibson: I was telling something at lunch downstairs and this should interest you very much. I was talking about psychic things with The Shadow concerned. That is, where I got pre-cognition of something. Like that town up in Maine where I pictured a deputy sheriff pulling a crime and, at that very time, a deputy sheriff was doing it. And there are several incidents like that. I've kept a list of them somewhere. But the one that was great--it makes you wonder; I get scientific fiction minded when I think of this. I begin to wonder about time as an element. Whether you can't--why shouldn't you move forward in it and come back? Everybody goes cold when you tell them that. But if we get on the train like you're going back to Boston and I go up the Hudson, I travel at a uniform rate of speed, and I watch a whole new thing unfold that maybe didn't exist until I come there and is non-existent as soon as I passed it. The only reason I don't subscribe to that is because I go over the same place time again, so I know it exists both before and after. But why isn't time that way? It just is that we're traveling through time at a constant rate and we come along to something--oh, this didn't exist and won't exist



until after we've passed it. But maybe it does and we're traveling through that like we're traveling through space. It seems to me to be perfectly plausible.

Well, I had this one thing that was very interesting. Mentioning Gladney reminded me of it. Gladney did a picture with a light-house and that was the story called *Crime Over Alcatraz*. (Actually, it was a George Rozen cover, 12/1/38.--Will) In it, I pictured a fog coming in through Golden Gate and in it crept this boat that came and attacked Alcatraz--after Alcatraz was enveloped in the fog--and rescued all the people and so forth. I'd been to San Francisco years before and I'd seen Golden Gate, but that was before the bridge was built. And you could only see the Golden Gate by being over there. I'd gone over to Presidio, which is on the channel, and so I was reasonably familiar (with it). I'd been on ferry boats and I knew about where Alcatraz lay and so forth. And I figured it all out, and I pictured this whole thing coming in through the Golden Gate. I knew there were fogs, but I'd never seen one roll in. That is, I didn't think I'd ever seen one. And I'd figured just how this whole thing was going to come in and envelope it.

I landed there in 1947 with Blackstone and, of all things, they wanted to do a radio talk and they wanted me on it. I was to talk about The Shadow. Blackstone was to talk about magic and I was going to tell them some things about The Shadow. And we go to this new place called the Top o' the Mark, which is on top of the Mark Hopkins Hotel, and it was built so tall that you could see over the hill and see down into that whole place, which you never could from San Francisco before because the hill blocked your view. While we're sitting there that afternoon, in comes my fog--right through the Golden Gate exactly as I described it! It came right along and enveloped Alcatraz while we're getting ready and I'm delivering the radio (talk) about The Shadow and watching this happen! Now I wonder maybe I saw that and then had a dream or something of that day and went back to the time when I wrote the story because it was so pat!

Steranko: *Deja vu!*

Mr. Gibson: Well, I've got to tell you one story which I think is fantastic. Hasn't anything to do with The Shadow, but it does show how it fits in with the research stuff. I was doing a radio show called "Strange" in 1955. This all had to do with supposed psychic occurrences. It was wonderful; I would send in an outline, play up the stories, send it in and let the script department break it down because I had to be in as the narrator, no less.

Well, this happened and watch how pat this damn thing is; I still can't get over it, except I've had other experiences just as wild. But this was a peach.

I picked up some old books and found that in the year 1897, a man named William Terrace--an actor in London--was appearing in a show, and his understudy had a dream that Terrace was being stabbed and killed and lying on the flight of steps. He told people about the dream and they said, "Oh, don't mention that; that's bad luck." That very night, Terrace came in. Instead of coming in through the stage door, he came through another way, down a little-used flight of steps, because he wanted to avoid a crazed actor--who's named Archer--who was trying to get money out of him. Archer happened to be at the stage door, saw him come down those steps, rushed through and stabbed him repeatedly and killed him on those steps. And the man that had the dream came in and was the man that had to rush and summon aid from the hospital--and the whole thing came exactly true.

All right, I read this. Now usually I didn't check these things much beyond that if I had a couple of books--these were pretty reliable books. Well, I had a hunch. I said: "I'm going to go down and find this thing out. I'm going to follow this and see; there's one flaw in this." You read a story like that and then you find the man had a dream and talked about it three weeks later. So, this is a fictionous thing; what verification do we have of that? So I went to the New York Public Library--the newspaper room--and I got the *London Times* for that date. And, sure enough, there was a detailed story in which it said: "A most remarkable thing was the dream had by Mr. So-and-so." And *bing!*; it proved the whole thing. Now there I normally would have quit. But I said: "Now I'm going to go through the *London Times* for other things." So I followed through by the index and I followed the trial. Well, what I learned from the trial was what everybody else had said: that Archer was adjudged insane and that was the end of it. But, in the course of the trial, a man came up who was not in any story before; and that was Thomas Terrace, the seventeen year old son of William Terrace, who testified that this Archer had acted crazily, and everything else. And it was upon his first hand testimony that Archer was judged insane, and he seemed to be very close to the thing. So I made a note that this was the one thing I discovered: about this Thomas Terrace.

I come back and tell my wife I had a good day on this thing and I said, "You know, Myer Silverstein has been asking us to come to one of his clam-bakes out near Peakskill." And I said, "Let's drive out." Well, we didn't like

driving out, especially on a hot day, except I said, "Well after all, they're out there now. We've got to show there sometime, and we don't want to wait til next year. So let's go." So we went. And we did this on a whim; we refused every other one. We get there and there's about sixty or seventy people spread all over the place, having hamburgers and so forth, and I happened to run into a fellow named Frank Clinton, a magician. He grabbed me. He said, "I've been listening to that program of yours called "Strange" and where in the world do you get these ideas?" I said, "I dig for them. It's a crazy thing; I did quite some digging today." And I told him about this case. "Want to hear about it?" And he said, "Yes, tell me." So I told him exactly how I did it and so forth. And when I said:

"Thomas Terrace," he said, "Thomas... there's a fellow named Tommy Terrace here. He's an old-timer; he's from the Lion's Club--over there." I walked up and said, "Was your father William Terrace?" And he said, "Yes." And he gave me a play-by-play description of the thing! And he had been born in 1880, this was in 1887 it happened--this was in 1955! And I find the only living witness whom I alone knew about because I was the only person who followed it that very morning; and there he is! And then he covers everything.

Well, I call that what you might call

psycho-magnetic force or psycho-proximity. It seems to me that when you're really after something and you want to learn about it, something begins drawing you like an attraction. I mean, this is possible; it's plausible. Assuming that there was something behind it, this is about the only explanation. And he gave me every detail I wanted to know.

Steranko: That's a story for "Strange" just by itself, as a matter of fact.

Mr. Gibson: Yes, it was terrific.

*(If Mr. Gibson's explanation of his experience sounds a bit far-fetched, the phenomenon he describes is a very real one. From personal experience, I submit that most of the contents of this issue--this interview included--are the result of that mysterious "attraction."--Will)*

Fan: It was theorized in an issue of *The Flash* that the original Flash's artist actually dreamed all of the adventures of the Flash and got up the next morning and wrote them down. And that his dreams were really reflections from another planet. Another "if" universe going on at the same time. Did you ever have cause to wonder if there exists, on another planet, The Shadow and that you have only been dreaming or reflecting about him?

Mr. Gibson: Well, let me tell you: I wrote a book about dreams, you know. It wasn't a bad book, but I'd love to do a bigger one. But I like that famous Chinese



philosopher who dreamed he was a butterfly. He woke up and said the dream was so realistic that, ever since, he's been wondering whether he was a man who was dreaming that he was a butterfly- or whether he was a butterfly who was dreaming he was a man! I think that so wraps it up. But these strange things come out.

*Duende:* Mr. Gibson.

*Mr. Gibson:* Yes.

*Duende:* I wonder, as a writer and as a human being, you've created one of the most recognized characters in all of literature. How do you feel as a human being, as a man, about having created this character who is so well known.

*Mr. Gibson:* I feel very good about it. Yeah. But for quite a while, I felt somewhat frustrated with it because I never was really properly recognized. I feel glad now because it's getting the recognition it deserves. And I've always admired people who were coming up with characters of that type. As I say, I always liked Sherlock Holmes. I was curious to think that Conan Doyle wanted to get away from Sherlock Holmes. You know, I met Conan Doyle. We were at the Society of American Magicians back around 1924 and Doyle was there and put on a showing of his picture, "The Lost World." He, at that time, was great friends with Houdini because, while they were in opposite camps, he knew that Houdini was sincere in his disbelief in spiritualism. So they batted it back and forth and, of course, Doyle was always trying to convert Houdini. I knew him (Houdini) quite well even then, because I was very active with the Philadelphia Assembly of Magicians, and he knew I was a newspaperman and that I'd push stories about him. And so, Houdini introduced me to Doyle. I chatted with him and told him how much I admired Sherlock Holmes and so forth. He was very cordial but he was more interested in "The Lost World" than he was in Sherlock Holmes by then.

He did a story, you know, called *The Land of Mist*. He took Professor Challenger, the man who was so important in *The Lost World*, and Professor Challenger got converted to spiritualism. He went to seances to prove they were all phoney and wound up as a believer. It's got exorcism in it, and it's quite a worthwhile book getting to read, just to see how he went. But anyhow, that meeting Doyle shaped me a little bit.

I also got to know quite well Arthur B. Reeve. Now he was the man who did Craig Kennedy. That was a very interesting series. I don't know how many of you are familiar with the Craig Kennedy stories. Craig Kennedy was a scientific detective and the stories were sold in very good magazines like *The American*. Al had

the same pattern. And that was, at the finish--it was a sort of an Erle Stanley Gardner finish except that these were short stories--always Craig Kennedy would bring all the suspects up to his laboratory and then would start showing pictures and things. "Aha! By the such-and-such a process, we proved that the poison was here," and all this business. But we thought it was terrific because the guy had such a detailed knowledge. Well, we found out later that he just made up the things! And he did was whack in a new process! I think I may have learned that before I started doing *The Shadow*. But he was a very likable guy.

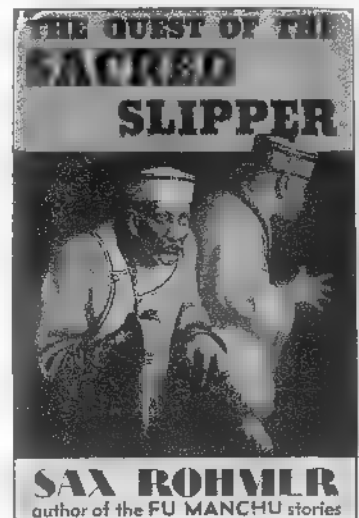
(Arthur B. Reeve's Craig Kennedy stories were very popular between 1910 and 1935 and enjoyed their greatest notoriety during the Twenties. Mr. Reeve may have been all bluff, but he was good at it--he was called in as a consultant during the Lindbergh kidnap case--Will,

Then there was the time I was out on the town with Sax Rohmer, whose stuff I always admired. Blackstone and I were in New York and we hit a S.A.M. meeting and Al Altman was there--who was with MGM. They were running a Sax Rohmer picture, and Rohmer got bored with the meeting and wanted to go out. So we all went out and then we found a speakeasy and spent most of the night there. And he was very good company. (This encounter would seem to have occurred in the Autumn of 1932, during one of Rohmer's occasional trips to New York. The picture in question is MGM's "The Mask of Fu Manchu" which starred Boris Karloff. See pages 209 and 214 of the Rohmer biography, Master of Villainy by Cay Van Ash and Elizabeth Sax

Rohmer. Rohmer, like Mr. Gibson was also a good friend of Harry Houdini.--Will, *Steranko:* Walter, could you tell the story about the Devil's Whisper? That's sort of my real favorite...

*Mr. Gibson:*

There again, we're getting into Arthur B. Reeve. They thought these things were more or less





concocted in *The Shadow*. But you do put two substances on your fingers and snap them, and it goes off like a report. Magicians were doing it as an opening stunt. When they wanted something to appear, instead of taking a pistol, you go like that. (*Slapping his hands together*) Well, you weren't supposed to use much of the stuff and a fellow named Paine, who had the Chicago Magic Company... He operated it as a mail order business right from his office, he was an accountant. Somebody found where the offices were and came up and wanted to buy some things. Well, Paine was very annoyed; he didn't like to do that. But he said, "Alright, give him the things." So, of all things, the guy wants to buy this "Devil's Whisper." So Paine, who didn't know anything about it, just opened it up and there were instructions in it. The fellow wanted to see how it was done. So Paine sticks too much on and goes *bang!* and blew his hand off, knocked himself unconscious, and stuns the other guy, practically, and wrecked the place. So when we said the thing was potent, it really was! I don't know what the two ingredients were.

Steranko: But you had The Shadow use it.

Mr. Gibson: I had The Shadow use it, you know, and many times he'd have his gloves off and somebody would hold him up and he'd come up with his fingers like this (*He raises his hands above his head*) and when he got like that, he did the snap, and the guy was staggered by this sudden explosion. I put the firing wand, too, in that *Murder by Magic*. (7/45) Magicians used that thing many years ago. That's a wand that fires like a pistol. Dunninger used to have one. Instead of making something vanish by aiming and firing the pistol, you'd swing the wand at it and *bang!* there's a big explosion from the wand like a pistol shot. I had a murder done with it in *Murder by Magic* in that hardcover book.

Steranko: Have you ever actually thought about The Shadow as being a magician himself? He used many, many magic techniques. Did that ever occur to you--that he dabbled in magic?

Mr. Gibson: I could never imagine him doing a show. Although I said to my wife the other day, "Maybe we should put out a book with The Shadow doing card tricks!"

Duende: Mr. Gibson, you stated in the Dover introduction to *The Shadow* that a number of the Chinatown novels in *The Shadow* were written in a block and released at intervals. Could you tell me roughly which novels they were, say the beginning and end novels?

Mr. Gibson: Well, let's see... I'm trying to think if I really did them that closely in a block. I mean I didn't exactly convey that idea. When I was on a couple of them, I would work the same material in. I may have had to stagger the actual writing. But I would go down to Chinatown and get data and things of that sort. All the other writers thought I knew all about Chinatown, which I didn't, and they would come to town--Les Dent and Frank Gruber and their wives--and we'd all go down to some Chinese restaurant and then fool around the shops and things of that sort.

But I'll tell you what were written together. That was the whole series of English novels. There was a haunted castle; there was the Zimba novel; and there were two or three others at that time. What I did, I had just gotten back from Florida and I was going to start on those, and I got an attack of Lumbago--oh boy, was that miserable!--and I just sat around. Could hardly move, and so I got all this data that I had on England and London and Paris, and I just worked on that and made notes galore. Then I wrote the

#### "THE DEVIL'S WHISPER"



stories one after the other. So I must have done three or four right there. Then we staggered them and dated them ahead. But that was what we usually would do, being six months ahead. (*The three novels in question were The London Crimes, 9/15/35; Zamba, 12/1/35; and Castle of Doom, 1/15/36, all of which were written in May and June, 1935.--Will*)

Member of the Audience: Mr. Gibson, is there any unpublished Shadow material, a story you started and never finished?

Mr. Gibson: No, hardly not. But there is something, though, that I've got to get into action quite soon, and I found them, fortunately. I made a synopsis on each of the stories. I actually did the typing of at least five thousand extra words of every story in the form of a synopsis.

I would do three things: background; an outline, and a synopsis. Now the background said: The story opens at about the time when so-and-so, the nephew--whom we mentioned in the background--happens to come home at this particular time. So after John (*editor John Nanovic*) had read the background, why this made sense. So then I would tell what went on with the story. That was easier for Ralston to read. Then I would make a complete breakdown, chapter by chapter, and I got so those things were exact. Sometimes I would call John and say I was going to get rid of such-and-such a character and switch this thing that way. And he'd okay it while the story was in progress. But originally I had trouble with that and I had to do lots of changes, and I cluttered up with too many characters. Well, I would have these synopses absolutely licked and that formula would take me three or four days. That was why sometimes I sped up on the writing of the stories. But the stories from then were duck soup.

Now Les Dent didn't work that way. Les Dent wrote a very breezy outline because his stories weren't as complex. He would bring in different things that happened but, every now and then, he'd find himself out on a limb. Something that he'd figured on wasn't jelling well enough; he had to beef up the story at some part. So Les used to have his troubles during the stories; But I never did. I think that's one reason I was very happy at doing the work; I never had anything in the way of a hitch.

Well, naturally I don't have any old Shadow manuscripts; they all went to Street & Smith. God knows what became of them. I didn't even keep the carbons because I used crummy carbon paper and threw that out because after the story was printed, I didn't need it. But I forgot the synopses, John used to send them back to me. So I came across a bundle of them a year or so ago.

In fact, I had the one on the Mardi Gras murders (*Mask of Mephisto*). I had picked that because I thought they might want to run some of it in the book, but they didn't. Now the funny thing, even before the comic came in, when I was working up in Maine some of the kids--my cousin's children and so forth--came in and latched on to some of these. One of the kids, who was a very smart kid, said: "Why don't you publish these in instead of the stories?" They moved in the present tense. "So-and-so is sitting in his chair, looking out at this." Well, they were very much like a comic. You'd be surprised when you read them. Here was the cast of characters and they flowed like a comic. So when I did the comic strips based on The Shadow, (*For S&S*) it was really chopping down, like those synopses. So I have some of these, and I think they'd be very interesting. I think I had a few beginnings of some things that I didn't publish-- that we never went ahead with.

Steranko: Walter, have you ever thought about doing a straight novel, a straight mainstream novel? Without magicians, without crime, without The Shadow?

Mr. Gibson: Well, sometimes, But it's hard just to tee off. If I really had something that was so overpowering I'd want to do it, why I would. But I got into the habit with The Shadow stuff-- of course, I did those Norgil the Magician stories. (*For Crime Busters, 1937-1940.--Will*)

Steranko: And Oldini, too.

Mr. Gibson: Ardini.

Steranko: Ardini.

Mr. Gibson: We were going to call him Oldini, but it turned out there was an Oldini the magician.

Steranko: Yeah, I knew that; I dreamt it last night. (*Laughter*)

Duende: Where did those stories appear, the Our-Ardini stories?

Mr. Gibson: They were published by *Current Detective*. What it was, I'd sold the things to Julian Proskauer, the editor for Vital Publications. He was going in for paperbacks, and then changed his mind. But he'd already bought those stories. I'd done two of them. One was a mind-reading detective and the other was a magician detective. The mind-reading detective was patterned on Dunninger. So I was going to follow through with more stories than those two. But after the War paper conditions were changing. But he paid for them, so he sold them to *Current Detective*, who published them. And then I never went on with any others. So I've got them now. I can renew the copyright and I'd like to republish them. They both make good stories. There was an Ardini Ardini was the magician-- and Dunninger was named Valdor, the man was

called Valdor.

It was very good Dunninger stuff; I went to one of Dunninger's shows, and Dunninger finished up the show with telling what was in a steel box that had been embedded in concrete. And they had to break the thing open during the radio show and identify the objects. They began to have trouble breaking it up and they just got it broken up before they went off the air. But, in the studios, they had funny little sliding seats that would come out and, as you get up, it would slide out and then slide back in on roller bearings so that people could walk by you. Very modern.

So I did the start of this story and based it directly on that radio thing, and Dunninger got a big wallop out of it because he recognized the thing that happened. And as he smashed the thing open, I described the thing exactly, except I chose what the articles were to be. One of the articles was an obsidian knife used by the old Aztecs. They used those things for sacrifices. So Valdor said, "Here we have an Egypt Egyptian scarab, and here we have this, and here we have the obsidian knife." Just then, *bing!* they're off the air. So he starts to bring it out and he doesn't bring it out. So afterwards they said, "Now, why didn't you bring it out at the last moment?" He said, "Because it wasn't there!" "What?" "Well, all those things were sealed in this thing before this was cemented. Somebody boo-boomed. There you are: there's the box and the thing wasn't there.

Just then so Valdor said, "Hush, don't talk

about this thing too much. There's a guy still sitting out there and he might be listening in. He's asleep, and they go over and shake him. He's dead with the obsidian knife in the middle of his back! That was the opening of the story. He got it from the damned seat; they had it planted, and when he got in that seat and slid back, *whump!* it got him.

*Steranko:* Gentlemen, I'm sorry to interrupt, but Mr. Gibson must catch a train. So Will Murray is going to take over the meeting; there's a couple of things he wants to discuss. But I must get Mr. Gibson on that train. So, I don't know about the rest of you, but I sure appreciate the time and trouble he's taken to come up here and talk to us. (*Applause*)

*Mr. Gibson:* Thanks again. I feel like Rip Van Winkle. I'm up in those Catskills, you know, where he went to sleep, and I come back after all these years. It's more than twenty! You see, the stories I've been talking about date back about thirty or forty--it was the Thirties.

*Steranko:* It was about forty-five years ago.

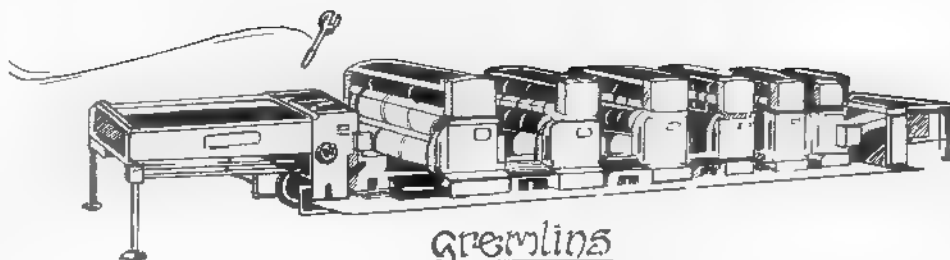
*Mr. Gibson:* ...Around '35 or '36 was when it began really hitting its stride. That's when the radio started. So that's quite a little while ago. Incidentally, I was working with Mary Margaret McBride on some radio thing. She's up there. I told her she'd better be very careful because I've been practicing for the 250th anniversary of Rip Van Winkle and, you know, a lot of things happen in those bowling alleys up there in the Catskills...

(*Laughter and much applause; exit Mr. Gibson*)



Frank Hamilton, I meets Walter Rosen, who's with Murray, who's of the opinion that he really doesn't be long in this picture looks on.

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## gremlins

**G**REMLINS, as everyone knows, are the little critters who delight in playing hell with the printed word. They misspell words, reverse presses, drop whole lines and paragraphs of type, frequently distorting any meaning a written work may have. All writers believe in Gremlins. They have to. If you've ever made the rounds from editor to proof reader to composing room, looking for the culprit who changed your pet phrase and had all parties deny responsibility, you have no choice but to believe in the little devils. Below are some choice examples of their handiwork as relates to the pulps. And if anyone out there still doubts that there are gremlins...Why, look back at *Duende* #11.

\*\*\*When Bantam Books reprinted the Doc Savage novel, *The King Maker*, they lopped off the blurb at the end of the novel and the gremlins must have made off with a few stray sentences, as well. After the sentence which reads: "That gets rid of the terror of the thing," Doc declared," there follows about five paragraphs of blurb, after which the story ends with the following:

Monk naturally knew nothing of the unpleasantness ahead when he suggested, "Say, Doc, how about takin' sort of a vacation for a few weeks, here in Calbia?"

Ham, overhearing the remark, snorted loudly. Princess Gusta, Ham had noted, had turned to the pleasantly homely Monk for comfort. Monk was doing very well as comforter. Giving up the job did not appeal to him.

\*\*\*In *The Glass Man*, a recent Avenger novel written by Ron Goulart, Cole Wilson (one of The Avenger's aides) boasts of having been a confidant of Houdini, Norgil and Walter Gibson:

\*\*\*In the recent Pyramid reprints of The Shadow novels, the Steranko covers for *Hands in the Dark* and *The Crime Cult* were exchanged. Also, the cover for *Mobsmen on the Spot* was a George Rozen cover reprinted from *The Shadow*, 5/15/42, *The Northdale Mystery*.

\*\*\*Most everyone is familiar with the story of how Ham Brooks earned his nick name after he was framed for Ham-stealing (presumably by Monk Mayfair) during World War I. However, in *Rock Sinister* (Doc Savage, 5/45) another version of the story is given:

Ham Brooks had picked up his nickname of Ham because he had once, in a fit of temper and because he could not find anything else to fuss about, howled that he did not like pork in any form. ...his statement about his tastes had been made in a mess hall he was inspecting, so ever after he had been 'Ham' Brooks to his outfit. He didn't like the nickname, but there was nothing he could do about it.

\*\*\*The fact that there was a character in Ted Tinsley's Shadow novel *The Fifth Napoleon* (2/1-/38) named Mike Hammer has been pointed out before, but how many are aware that there was a writer named Peter Gunn writing for *Ten Detective Aces* during the Thirties?

\* \* \* \* \*

**A**T the head of this issue's lead article, "The Secret Kenneth Robesons," sits a mural in miniature executed by Rick Roe. Utilizing scenes and characters culled from the novels of the many Kenneth Robesons, this mural depicts in architectural terms the scope of the Doc Savage series. Herewith is the key:

In the center is Doc Savage's skyscraper headquarters, and scanning to the left are:

\*\*\*The destruction of Doc's lair, from Alan Hathway's *The Headless Men*.

\*\*\*Maximus, the Trylon and the Perisphere, from William G. Bogart's *World's Fair Goblin*.

\*\*\*King Chaac and the Valley of the Vanished, from Harold A. Davis' *The Golden Skull*.

Scanning to the right are:

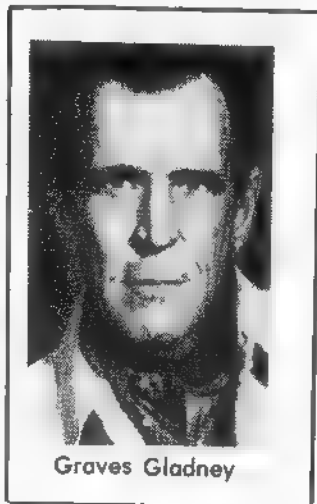
\*\*\*Ool, from W. Ryerson Johnson's *Land of Always-Night*.

\*\*\*The *Silver Cylinder* flying above Empire City, from Laurence Donovan's *He Could Stop the World*.

\*\*\*Apat guarding the Fortress of Solitude, from Lester Dent's *Fortress of Solitude*.

# RAGGED EDGES

**D**'UENDE'S first letter column opens on a sad note. By this time, most of you have learned of the tragic death of Graves Gladney--whom we interviewed last issue--on March 24, 1976. Mr. Gladney's work for *The Shadow* and other pulps was but a portion of his active life--he was also an instructor at the Washington University School of Fine Arts and a big game hunter--and, in his own estimation, a minor part of his life. So to eulogize him as a pulp artist would be, we feel, inappropriate here.



Graves Gladney

Before his death, Graves Gladney had been the subject of several interviews, of which ours was but one. The *Duende* interview was extremely well-received, and we like to think ours was the best of the lot. Rather than say any more on the subject, we'd like to present Mr. Gladney's last letter to us.

Dear Mr. Murray,

Thank you for the copy of your *Duende* which just arrived. Also, thank you for quoting me correctly & Verbatim. On various subjects I have been interviewed by divers newspapers & magazines since 1941-42 and you are the first to quote me accurately. I don't mind disagreement with what I say so long as I actually said it. One scribe from *American Magazine*, sent to interview me after Normandy, (I was ordered to answer his questions) so garbled & misquoted my statements that I sounded like some Hollywood jerk playing at war. I was ashamed to go back to my outfit when the article was published. So thank you. You told me as I am, and the truth never disturbs me.

I think that your magazine is unusually well organized & presented--far more professional than others I have seen attacking the same subject, i.e. pulps. I confess that I *still* can't understand the enthusiasm manifested for those old magazines.

I was interested in Mr. Frank Gruber's estimate of Nanovic. *Religious* he was, and I nev-

er knew it! I would have considered it a non-sequiter even if I *had*.

You're *almost* right about Tom Lovell. He quit *all* pulps in June, 1937.

GRAVES GLADNEY

**A**S well-received as our interview was, Mr. Gladney's outspoken comments rankled some of those whom he knew. With all due respect to Mr. Gladney's memory, we present the following:

Dear Will,

...I have no objection to Graves Gladney's criticism of my knowledge of art. I never had had any. I think I remember that "lousy" cover he brought in that he said I "grabbed to my bosom, and said that's the kind of cover I want." That was the kind of cover I wanted. As Gladney said, it wasn't art. BUT WE WEREN'T SELLING ART; WE WEREN'T EVEN SELLING LITERATURE. We were selling excitement; were selling dreams for the average American. That I know, because many and many a reader has told me that over the years; and even consistantly today. Last week, a fellow I worked with for the past ten years casually mentioned *The Shadow*. He had been a great fan; had the pin and everything. And when he found out I was the editor--he just about embraced me. He really loved *The Shadow*, without any analysis or anything else. In fact, Walt's (*Walter Gibson*) coming down next week, and this fellow's going to buy us all a dinner, not just a drink!

JOHN NANOVIC

Henry Steeger, past president of Popular Publications, also took exception to Mr. Gladney's statements concerning his being paid half free for illustrations, after he was promised full fee. Mr. Steeger informs us that he never bought illustrations from Mr. Gladney or anyone else, as that duty was not his, as president of Popular Publications. Regretably, space does not allow us to print his letter, but the interested may refer to *Xenophile* #26, where Mr. Steeger has already expressed his opinions in greater detail.

Mr. Gladney consented to be interviewed by *Duende* upon the stipulation that we adhere to his exact words, which we did. We don't apologize for honoring a gentleman's agreement, but we do sincerely apologize to those individuals who were stung by Mr. Gladney's outspokenness.



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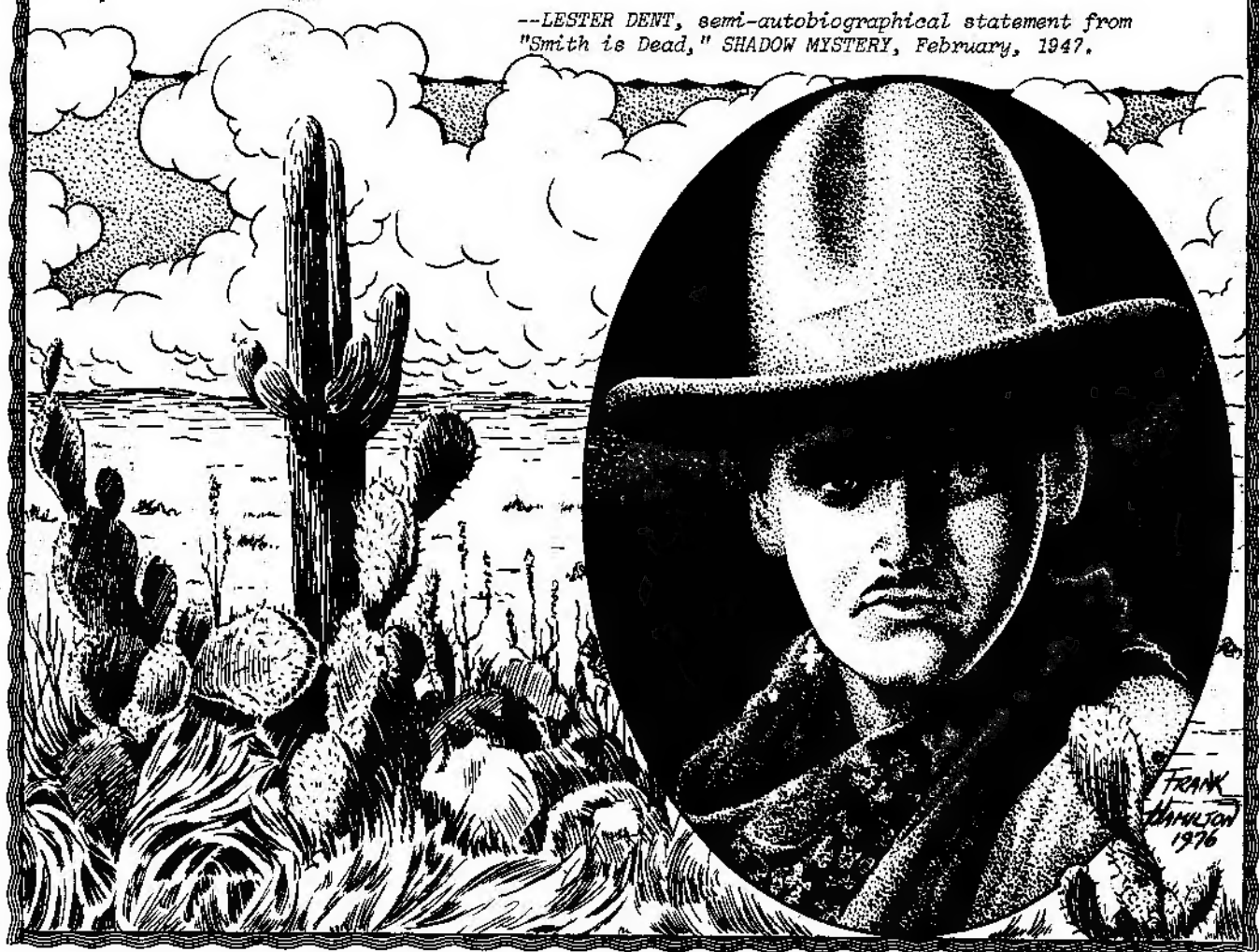
Lester Dent was born in La Plata, Missouri in 1904. Early in his life, his family moved to a sheep ranch in Wyoming, miles from any neighbor, where young Lester spent his early years. An only Child, he had only his own imagination to fall back upon during those long, lonely days....

"He had very few playmates and had to use his mind to create friends and adventures for himself. He was really a writer long before he began to write."--MRS. NORMA DENT.

"He blamed his starved youth on a ranch for burdening him with the traditional cowboy's way of putting all female humans on a pedestal... He had lived his youth in a dry land, in Wyoming, and it had laid a mark on him. At the slightest excuse his memories would walk, shuddering, in a sage-brush land flat and endless to the horizon, a prairie that crackled dryness and shook with heat, the only green things the little cookie-shaped cacti. The loneliness and the thirst for human beings could still grip him. They were real.

"He was a man who put quite a value on his own emotions, and he blamed having grown up in such a waste for making him sensitive. His father had been a foreman on a ranch, the nearest neighbor was thirty-two miles away, and there were no kids his own age, and no girls. No close human contacts at all, so naturally he had reached manhood with the feeling of having been cheated, betrayed, denied of experiences that others had had. The way he felt about things seemed to mean too much to him. Not for thirteen years had he been back to Wyoming, but the lonesome land had molded him, and the memory of it could still almost smother him."

--LESTER DENT, semi-autobiographical statement from "Smith is Dead," SHADOW MYSTERY, February, 1947.





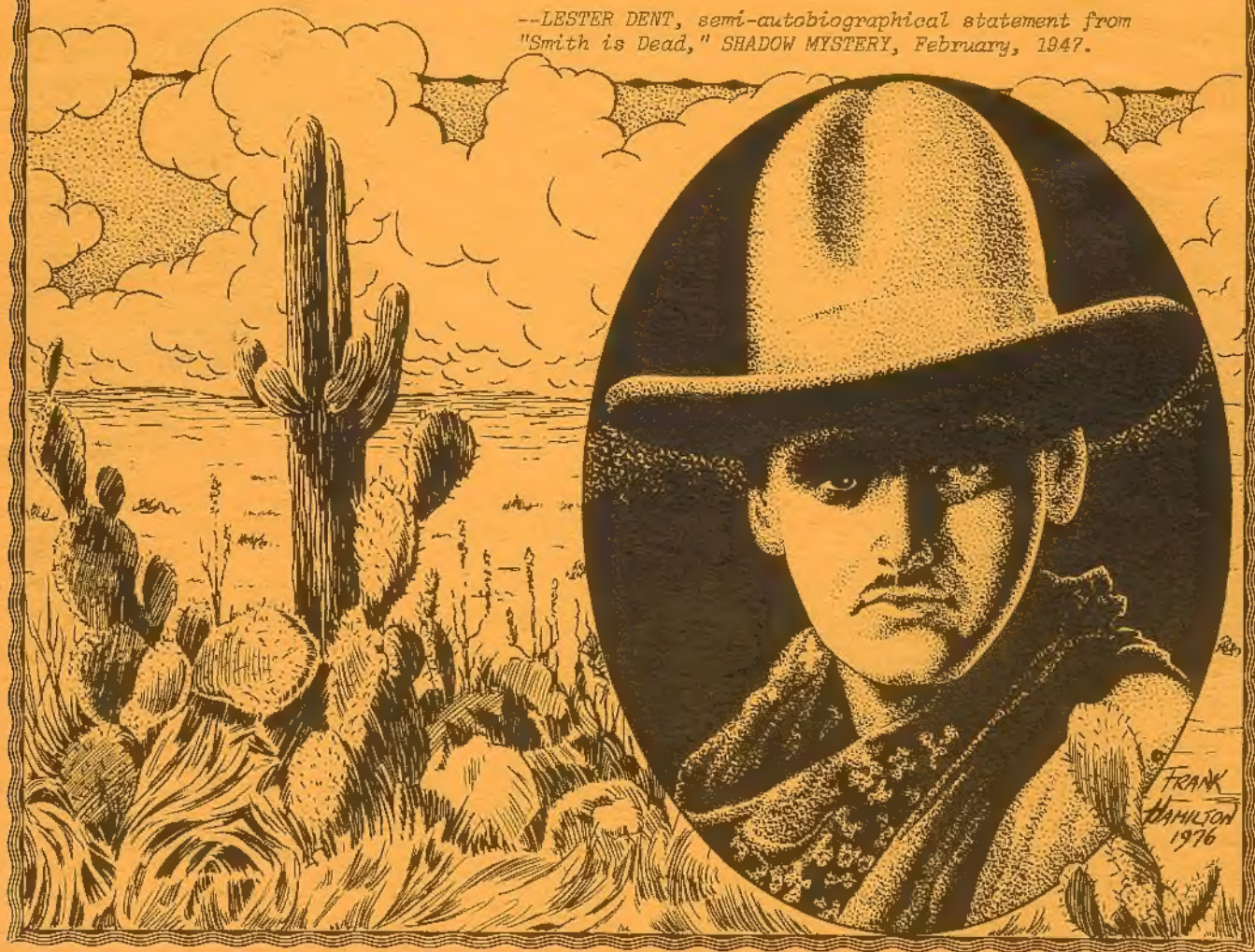
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# THE Shadow

